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Truceless War

Carthage's fight for survival,
241 to 237 BC

Dexter Hoyos

BRILL

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Truceless War

History of Warfare

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VOLUME 45

Truceless War

Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC

by

Dexter Hoyos



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2007

On the cover: Elephant attacked by python. Detail of a hunt scene in a Roman mosaic found at Dermesch close to Carthage. Now in the Musée de Carthage, and reproduced by kind permission of the Institut National du Patrimoine de la République Tunisienne. Map by the author.

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My greatest debt, as ever, is to my wife Jann and our daughter Camilla, for understanding, support and tolerance during my sometimes unsocial preoccupations, and I dedicate this study to them.

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PROLOGUE

THE WARS OF CARTHAGE

In the third century BC, the republic of Carthage was one of the three leading states in the western Mediterranean, along with Rome and Syracuse. Founded by settlers from Tyre in Phoenicia over five centuries before, Carthage now ruled the rich and populous North African hinterland which Greeks called Libya, and exercised varying degrees of dominance in other territories: along the coasts to its east almost as far as Cyrene, at numerous trading ports westward to the straits of Gibraltar, and over the western third of Sicily and the coastal lowlands of Sardinia. Carthage itself, on its headland overlooking the gulf of Tunis, was one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean, with a population estimated between 100,000 and a quarter of a million. Carthaginian, or 'Punic', maritime commerce covered the Mediterranean and extended outside, monopolising the tin trade from north-western Europe and exotic products from the west coast of Africa. The republic could also project military power: it could launch fleets of up to 200 warships, called quinqueremes, and used Libyan recruits and foreign mercenaries to field armies reportedly as large as 70,000 men.¹

The Carthaginians did not enjoy an untroubled prosperity. Like the other two powers, they were often involved in wars with neighbours, and sometimes in repressing Libyan revolts. Often oppressed by taxes and conscription, the native communities of North Africa tried more than once to rid themselves of their dominators: for instance allying with Agathocles, ruler of Syracuse, during his invasion of Africa in the last decade of the fourth century. These insurgencies failed every time, leaving the Libyans again subdued and surly.²

Internationally, wars in Sicily against Syracuse and other Sicilian Greek states took up much Punic history and energy. They were

¹ General studies of Carthage include Picard, *LDC* (1968); Huss (1985); Lancel (1992); Peters (2004). Carthage's population: Chapter 20 n. 2. 'Punic': the Romans often called the Carthaginians *Poeni*, recalling their Phoenician origin; *Punicus* is the Latin adjective.

² Libyan revolts: Diod. 14.77.1–6; 15.24.2–3. Libyan support for Agathocles, 20.3.3, 17.1, 38.1, 55.5, 64.2; Justin 22.6.12.

expensive and stressful. From 310 to 307 Agathocles of Syracuse countered the Punic siege of his city by invading Africa: it took strenuous effort by the Carthaginians—helped by discord among the invaders—to defeat him. Twenty years later a fresh Sicilian war brought in the adventurer-king Pyrrhus of Epirus on the Greek side, with sweeping initial successes (278–277). The Carthaginians were driven from their other Sicilian strongholds to be penned in the seaport fortress of Lilybaeum, today's Marsala, and Pyrrhus even thought of repeating Agathocles' invasion. Once again dissension among their foes saved Carthaginian fortunes, and after Pyrrhus left Sicily in 276 the war wound down to a compromise peace with Syracuse under its new leader Hiero.

These wars had been taxing, even desperate, but were all land-based and fought in Sicily, save for Agathocles' expedition. They all ended with the status quo more or less re-established, Carthage as overlord of western Sicily while Syracuse, Acragas and other states remained independent. Much worse was to come.

With Rome the Carthaginians enjoyed long-standing trade and diplomatic relations—their first treaty defining these was made reportedly before 500—and in 279 both states agreed on a pact of provisional assistance against their common foe Pyrrhus, though it was not activated. Then, in 264, both the Carthaginians and the Romans intervened in a conflict in Sicily. The new conflict was between Syracuse, under Hiero, and the straits city of Messina which was occupied by the Mamertines, an aggressive body of Italian mercenaries from Campania. Although both Carthage and Rome supported the Mamertines, both soon fell out with each other, opening a conflict which lasted twenty-three years.³

The First Punic War was pursued not just in Sicily but on the seas, in Sardinia, and for a time in North Africa, where a Roman invasion in 256–255 experienced turns of fortune much like those of Agathocles: brilliant early successes, then disaster (but unlike Agathocles, the Roman commander Regulus did not escape homewards). The original provocateurs, Messina and Syracuse, soon dropped out of the matter—both, ironically, becoming allies of Rome—and the struggle from 261 on focussed on whether the Romans could expel the Carthaginians from

³ On the origins and course of the First Punic War see Harris (1979) 63–4, 108, 113–14, 182–90; Caven (1980) 5–66; Scullard (1989); Lazenby (1995); Hoyos (1998) 1–115; Goldsworthy (2000) 65–140.

Sicily (Pyrrhus' old dream) or the Carthaginians yet again hold on to their ancient Sicilian territories.

The costs of the conflict were severe to both sides. The Romans, despite their inexperience in naval warfare, proved superior to their enemies in most sea-battles, even at the outset in 261, but fell prey to repeated disasters in storms. The Carthaginians destroyed Regulus' invasion and won some other engagements on land and sea, but after 250 were confined (again reminiscent of Pyrrhus' time) to the seaports of Lilybaeum and Drepana on Sicily's west coast—strongpoints which the Romans found they could not capture. The only fighting from 247 on, apart from these twin sieges, consisted of raids on the Roman forces and on the coasts of Italy by the new Carthaginian field commander, Hamilcar nicknamed 'Barca', who based himself first on a mountain stronghold near Panormus and then on part of the mountain called Eryx, today's Erice, above Drepana.

His activities proved fruitless. The Romans in 242 launched a new fleet, defeated the poorly-equipped and clumsily handled Punic fleet off the Aegates Islands outside Drepana in March 241, and then were asked for terms by the exhausted and disheartened Carthaginians. Hamilcar, ironically still undefeated, had to accept a peace which required Carthage to end three centuries of involvement in Sicily by withdrawing entirely from the island, and to pay a heavy money indemnity to Rome.

It was the Carthaginians' first complete defeat in war for centuries, and its impact on them and on Libya led to further catastrophe. The mercenaries and Libyan conscripts who made up the Punic forces in Sicily had long gone unpaid; at the same time, and paradoxically, Carthage's Libyan subjects had been harshly taxed and badly treated for years. These two currents of discontent came together to form a tide which threatened to wash away Carthaginian power, and even the city itself. The war was fought, especially in its later stages, without quarter on either side and marked by episodes of abnormal savagery: thus Polybius, our chief source for events, characterises it as a 'Truceless War'. Carthage survived, but this life-and-death struggle and its aftermath were decisive for the city's future history.⁴

⁴ 'Truceless War' (ἄσπονδος πόλεμος): Pol. 1.65.6 (his one use of the term); Walbank, 1.131. ἀκήρυκτος (*akeryktos*, 'heraldless') in describing pitiless enmity is often coupled elsewhere with *aspondos*, e.g. by Plutarch, *Aristides* 1, and (quoting an Athenian

THE CARTHAGINIANS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

In 241 the Carthaginians owned the land bordered by the gulf of Tunis on the city's west and south, up to twenty or thirty miles inland, and also the hilly but fertile Cape Bon peninsula on the eastern side of the gulf. The rest of Punic North Africa, covering most of today's northern Tunisia, was under Carthaginian rule in varying forms.

There were other Phoenician colonies along the coast: notably Hip-pacra (modern Bizerte) and Utica north of Carthage; and to the city's east, in coastal Byzacium on the eastern coast of the gulf of Sirte, towns like Hadrumetum near modern Sousse, Leptis Minor (Lamta) and Thapsus. Far away to the east, the furthestmost district of Emporia, Lepcis and its neighbours Oea and Sabratha were still other Phoenician cities under Carthage's dominance. As dwellers in 'Libya' (in its broader Greek sense of North Africa), the Phoenician colonies were sometimes called Libyphoenician, a term equally applicable (but never applied) to the Carthaginians. It need not be doubted that people in all the colonies, Carthage included, intermarried with their Libyan neighbours, just as they sometimes did with the Numidians further west.⁵

As sister-foundations to Carthage, the Libyphoenicians were allies and not subjects; details, though, are few and the difference need not always have been large. In a later age, for instance, Lepcis or (much likelier) Emporia, the region extending from the Gulf of Gabès eastward to that city, reportedly paid Carthage one Greek talent or about 6,000 drachmas a day—conceivably a combination of direct tribute, harbour-dues and other imposts. Their duties in war may have been more flexible—and their contingents better paid—than those of Carthage's Libyan subjects.⁶

The Libyan communities under Punic rule were especially numerous in the districts around the Bagradas (the Mejerda), the region's only substantial river, its south-western tributary the Muthul (Mellègue), and between these and the streams to their east, the Siliana and Mel-lane as they are called today. These areas of Punic North Africa were fertile and populous, matched only by Byzacium south of Cape Bon.

decree) *Pericles* 30; Aeschines, *On the Embassy* 80 (advising against wars ἀσπόνδους καὶ ἀκηρύκτους); cf. metaphorically Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 262.

⁵ Whether 'Libyphoenicians' may, in fact, have meant people of mixed Phoenician-Libyan descent is also debated: Manfredi (2003) 398–400.

⁶ On the tribute paid by Lepcis, or by all Emporia, see Chapter 4 n. 11. Walbank, 1.145, 345, and Hoyos (2003) 224, wrongly identify Emporia with Byzacium.

Villages and small towns dotted the landscape. It is likely enough that the small towns, each with its cluster of villages, were the centres of separate communities like clans or tribes. In some districts, such communities would be still more rural. Carthage's rule extended as far west as Sicca (Le Kef) and south-west to Theveste (Tébessa), both in productive upland areas bordered by mountains, and both on the edges of lands inhabited by Numidian peoples: those far-western areas were probably ethnically Numidian rather than Libyan. Many centres grew and prospered in Roman times: Bulla Regia for example, Mactar, Sicca, Thuburbo Maius, and Thugga.

Little is known about Libyan territorial organisation, but evidence from the Roman era could suggest that the Carthaginians divided the country into large administrative sectors. In those later times, many towns boasted local officials with Carthaginian titles (like 'sufete') and Punic-named assemblies of the local citizenry, but it is not at all clear that they used or were allowed to use such titles in the third century. Still, local officials and assemblies were virtually universal in the Mediterranean world, whatever their names; more important would be what authority they had. A Libyan community was probably responsible for administering its own day-to-day affairs and collecting the tribute to be paid to Carthage, no doubt along with revenues for the local administration. Whether it had a formal say in how much tribute was payable or how many recruits it must supply when demanded, or if it could oppose any intervention by a Punic official—especially a high-ranking one—is a great deal less likely.

There was no doubt a good deal of intermarriage, as well as other kinds of intercourse (social and economic), between Libyans, Libyphoenicians and Carthaginians. Aristotle in the fourth century BC reported that the latter, every so often, eased population pressure in the city by sending some citizens out to settle in the hinterland. If this happened often, with sizeable numbers of citizens, it ought to have strengthened the ties between the peoples. But unless Aristotle is simply wrong, the colonists from Carthage may have been too few to keep the ties firm, or they and their descendants became 'Libyanised' in their turn. For events were to show that the Libyans, or most of them, were so estranged from their rulers by 241 that they took part enthusiastically in a determined drive to overthrow Punic power.⁷

⁷ 'Punicisation' of the Libyan interior: Manfredi (2003) 378–404, seeing it as a policy increasingly used from the mid-third century on (379, 403–4). Carthaginian citizens

West of Libya lay Numidia, essentially the mountain chains and plateaux which extend beyond Tunisia's highlands for hundreds of miles to meet the Atlas ranges in modern Morocco. The Numidians were a composite of many clans and tribes, partly nomadic (hence their name, 'Nomades' to the Greeks) and pastoral, partly more settled and agricultural, divided into lordships and small kingdoms. The eastern Numidians, dwelling alongside Punic Africa, notably the Massyli people, had long had relations with Carthage—relations not always friendly, with the Carthaginians at times expanding their areas of dominance westward (most recently to Sicca and Theveste) and the Numidians fond of raiding their neighbours' possessions. But they held each other in shared respect. Marriages between high-ranking Carthaginian and Numidian families took place (Hamilcar Barca's family among them), and the skill, hardiness and élan of Numidian cavalymen made them allies prized by Carthaginian generals. In later times, when Numidia was unified and progressing in both size and sophistication, it borrowed widely from Punic civilisation; the process surely began much earlier.⁸

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For both the First Punic War and the Truceless War our chief source is the second-century BC Greek historian Polybius, a notable citizen of Megalopolis in the Peloponnese. He spent nearly two decades of his adult life at Rome (from 167 to 150) as a privileged political detainee, was present with the Roman army at the sack of Carthage in 146, and then wrote a forty-book analytical *History* of the Mediterranean world covering the period 264 to 146. Books 1 and 2 form an introduction (so he himself terms them) to his detailed coverage of events from 220 on: Book 1 on the two wars just mentioned (264 to 237), Book 2 on Mediterranean events down to 221.

His account of the wars in Book 1 is necessarily concise. After a brief preface, the background and course of the First Punic is narrated in chapters 5 to 64, then the Truceless War in only the final quarter from chapters 65 to 88. Yet without this quarter little would be known about

sent into Libya as colonists: Aristotle, *Politics* 2.11.15, 6.5.9. On the structure of the rebellion in Libya see Chapter 12.

⁸ On the Numidians see Horn and Rüger (1979); Storm (2001) 15–29, cf. 101–12 for later developments; Hiesel (2004).

the war. A few excerpts on it do survive from a much broader world history, again in 40 books, by Diodorus, a Sicilian rather uncritically compiling materials about a century after Polybius. The excerpts closely echo corresponding passages in Polybius and all but certainly are based on them; as a result they do not supply really independent information, despite the occasional attempt to show the opposite.

Other ancient writers have mere summaries of the war, like Cornelius Nepos in his brief Latin life of Hamilcar Barca; or short references to one or two events in it. Thus the second-century AD Greek author Appian, narrating past Roman wars in Africa and elsewhere, and the Byzantine John Zonaras' epitome of the *Roman History* by the third-century senator Cassius Dio are interested only in a few episodes that involved the Romans, notably the Carthaginians' arrest of Italian merchants trading with the enemy—an episode crudely distorted by Appian and Dio, who plainly drew on an anti-Punic historiographical strand.

Polybius' narrative therefore has two unique features. Short though it is, it is the one detailed account of the war to survive; and it records Carthage's sole major conflict not fought against Greeks or Romans or outside Africa. These features are in turn tempered by other important, but more limiting, aspects. Above all, he has particular didactic aims in narrating the struggle.

The war's extremes of barbarism offer, in his view, an instructive example of the horrors occurring when culture and training (the Carthaginians, in other words) have to do battle against ignorant savagery (their opponents). A preoccupation throughout the *History* is Polybius' moralising concern about the corruption of Greek civilisation versus the honorable and victorious austerity of Rome. Although the Carthaginians are marginal participants in the working-out of this theme, still in the context of ruthless rebellion by their mercenaries and Libyan subjects they carry the flag of civilised morality.

Important to Polybius, too, is the vital rôle played by Hamilcar Barca, father of the great Hannibal. He claims that this war helps explain Hannibal's war with Rome—an assertion which he does not clarify, but presumably would defend by linking Hamilcar's ensuing dominance in Carthage's affairs, achieved through his services against the rebellion, with his supposed plan for a revenge-war against the Romans. For while Hamilcar did not live to put that plan into action, he bequeathed it (so Polybius holds) to his son. And a third theme in the narrative is the ever-present perils from employing mercenary forces, a practice

widespread in the Greek world and always liable to bring trouble on the employers. The Carthaginians were famous for their mercenary armies, and the crisis in 241 following their defeat by Rome gave Polybius a case-study which he was keen to analyse.⁹

These special interests, combined with the need to make his account concise, dictate the shape of Polybius' *Truceless War* and what aspects he emphasises. This leads to notable imbalances. With the rebels, he gives far more space to describing and discussing their amorality, savagery and overconfidence than to their military and organisational details, like recruitment, troop strengths and logistics. Even though he makes clear that the bulk of the rebel forces consisted of Libyan troops—and that the chief of the revolt was a Libyan, Mathos—he remains much more interested in their allies the mercenaries and what he takes to be typical mercenaries' psychology.

On the Carthaginian side, Polybius initially paints a harsh picture of their dealings with their disgruntled mercenary and Libyan soldiery, and lack of success in the field when the revolt starts. Not too surprisingly, this treatment is notably modified after Hamilcar returns to command: from then on Polybius' Carthaginian focus is mainly a Hamilcarian focus. This is often explained as due to him copying an earlier, strongly pro-Hamilcar account, but Polybius may just as likely, or more so, be selecting information from earlier accounts to shape his own focus. On the Carthaginian side, too, he shows only the most limited interest in military specifics—as in how the Carthaginians gathered, paid and supplied their armies (and warships)—and equally limited interest in politics at Carthage, which Hamilcar came to dominate.

Yet despite selective narration, partiality to Hamilcar, and clear dislike of the rebels, Polybius does not tell a mere one-sided tale. The Carthaginians' shabby dealings with the veteran and long-unpaid army of Sicily and systematic oppression of their Libyan subjects are critically reported, nor does Polybius hide—rather, he approves—Hamilcar's ruthless behaviour to prisoners in retaliation for the enemy's own cruel-

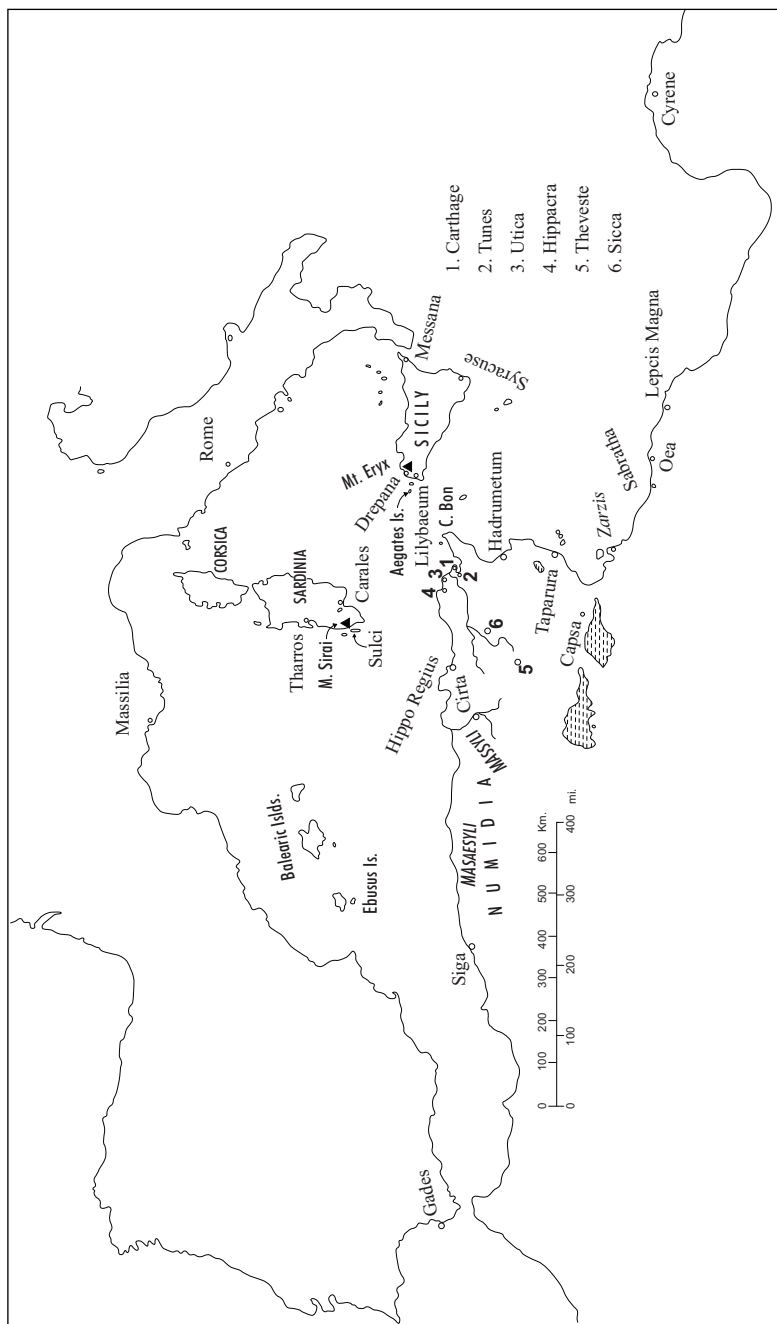
⁹ Polybius' didactic aims: 1.65.6–9. Culture vs barbarism in the war: 1.65.7, 81.5–11; cf. 88.3 (note 4.20.1–21.11, discussing a similar contrast within contemporary Arcadia); Walbank, *Comm.* 1.131–2, 145. Significantly, therefore, the *Truceless War* contrasts with the immediately preceding First Punic, which had been 'equally characterised on both sides by enterprise, by lofty spirit, and above all by ambition for supremacy' (1.64.5: Loeb tr.). On Polybius' cultural and moralising themes see Champion (2004), especially Chs. 1–3. *Truceless War* a cause of Hannibal's: Pol. 1.65.8–9; Walbank, 1.132. Mercenary peril: 65.7.

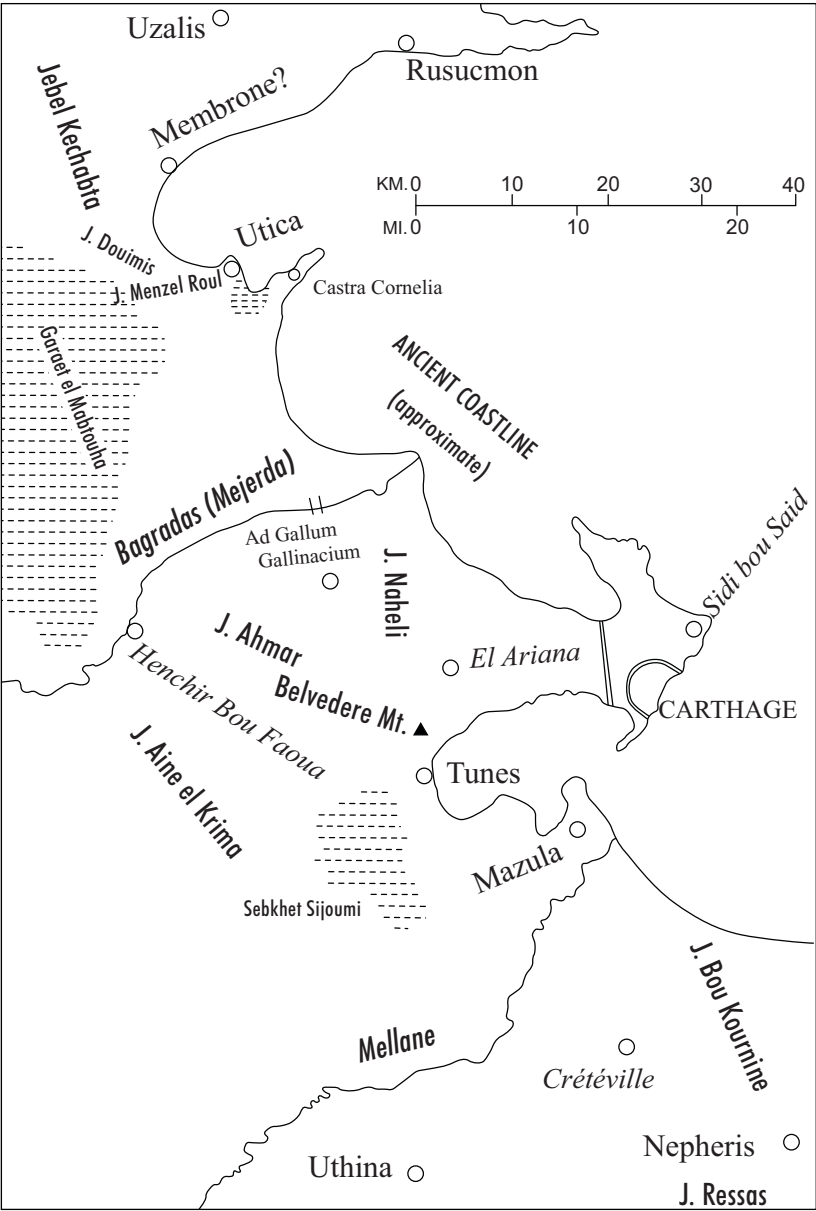
ties. Looked at closely, his telling reveals much more than it explicitly avows: the leadership qualities of the rebel generals, for instance; the resourcefulness and resolution on both sides as the struggle wore on; even the moral dubiousness of Hamilcar's behaviour in his famous victory at The Saw.

The crucial limitation in his account is that it is essentially a sequence of episodes, chosen to reflect his special concerns, told in some (though not in exhaustive) detail, and linked by a very compressed—often generalised—narrative. The upshot is that we have minimal information on the two sides' strategies, on topography, place-names, commanders and subordinates, tactics in most of the battles, and even the war's chronology (a sharp contrast to how he tells the First Punic War).

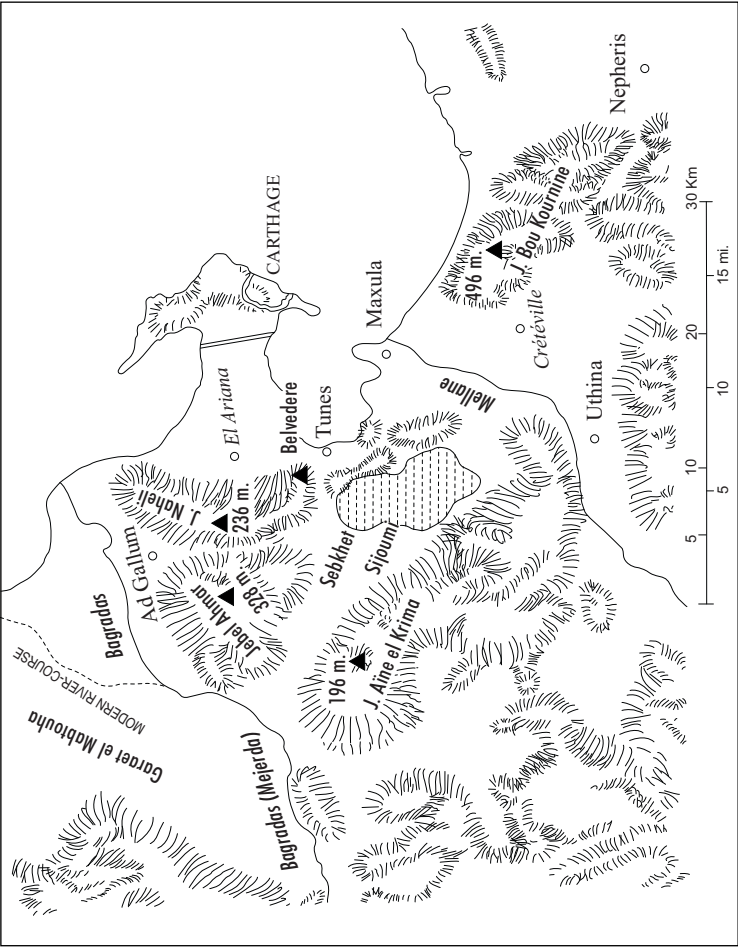
Even so, when his narrative is carefully examined, details compared where possible with other sources' statements, and Punic Africa's topography studied, a coherent reconstruction of the origins, course and impact of the conflict can be achieved. This effort is worth making. For the epic of the Truceless War illuminates the character and quality of both the Carthaginians and the other peoples of North Africa in an era crucial to their history, while also teaching much about the methods and principles of one of the premier historians of the ancient world.¹⁰

¹⁰ The source-narratives are assessed in detail in Chapter 24.

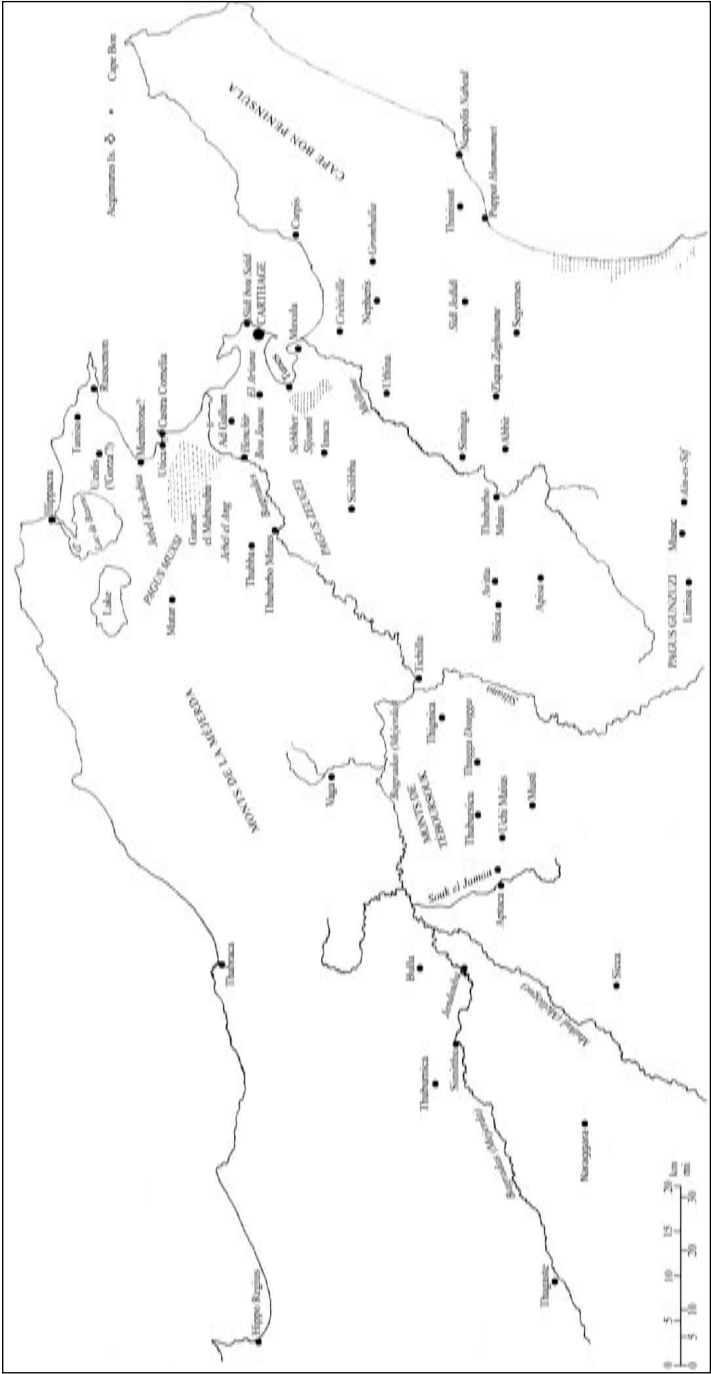




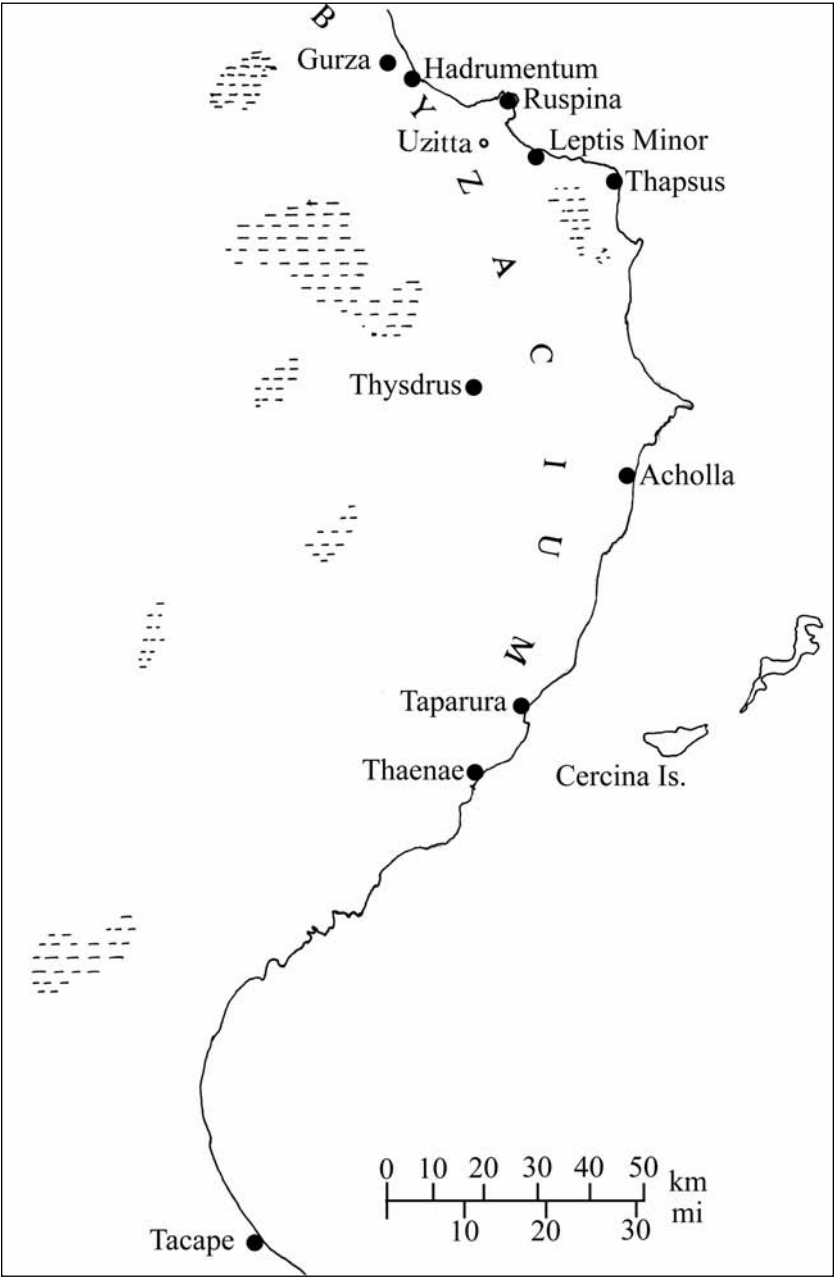
Map 2. Carthage and Its Neighbourhood



Map 3. Carthage: Physical Environs



Map 4. Punic North Africa (North)



Map 5. Punic North Africa (South)/Byzacium

CHAPTER ONE

GISCO

Gisco the new commanding general cannot have been pleased. The long Roman war had ended in defeat. His commander-in-chief had abruptly handed over responsibility and sailed for home. Now there were over twenty thousand unemployable troops encamped along the west coast of Sicily expecting to be paid off. As he rode between Lilybaeum and Drepana, the last two ports under his authority, and spoke with the men and their officers, he knew that not only he himself faced serious potential trouble but so did his home state across the water, the republic of Carthage.

Until his sudden promotion Gisco had been commandant at Lilybaeum. His promotion shows that he had been the second-ranking Carthaginian in the Sicilian theatre. As a veteran officer he had no doubt taken part in much of the recent war: the Carthaginians had fought the Romans over two decades, from 264 to 241, in Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, and on the seas between. Both sides had been mutually ground down in men, matériel and money. Their once-powerful navies had had to be laid up in port. Fighting contracted to around the fortress-ports Lilybaeum and Drepana—a wearisome round of unproductive sieges, sallies and skirmishes. Gisco's latest commanding general Hamilcar, son of Hannibal, in 244 lodged himself and his field army on a spur of Mount Eryx, the lofty height overlooking Drepana and the Roman siege-army, but his bold sorties and raids (which won him the nickname Barca, if this means 'lightning' as usually thought) were pinpricks to the Romans. Then abruptly the war was lost.

A newly-built Roman fleet under the consul Quintus Lutatius Catulus appeared off the coast in 242 and threatened Drepana and Lilybaeum with total cutoff from supplies. At Carthage a relief fleet had to be put together. It took months and was ineptly done even so. In early March, 241, when sailing again became feasible, the relief fleet hove into view by the Aegates Islands a few miles from Drepana, its warships weighed down with supplies for the besieged towns. Lutatius sailed into the attack and in a few hours sank, captured or drove off the enemy. The Carthaginian republic had no further forces available and now it

faced both the loss of its last Sicilian strongholds and a new invasion of North Africa, with no guarantee that it could defeat this as it had the earlier one. Hamilcar Barca was sent full authority to negotiate terms. On receiving it he sent representatives to find Lutatius Catulus.

Gisco met the consul's spokesmen and conducted them out to Eryx. As both men no doubt expected, the Romans' demands were severe. More galling again, when Hamilcar did negotiate terms with Lutatius they were rejected at Rome and ten senatorial envoys were sent down to Sicily to revise them. The envoys imposed heavier financial demands which Hamilcar had no way of refusing, so that the final treaty still more plainly advertised Carthage's defeat.

The republic had ruled western Sicily and its offshore islands for centuries. Now it had to give them up. It agreed to pay over an immediate one thousand talents' indemnity (equalling 6,000,000 Greek drachmas) and then 220 talents a year for ten years. Other limitations—no mercenary troops to be recruited from Italy, for example, and all Roman deserters to be handed over—Hamilcar also had to accept. One or two mutually respectful stipulations, like a security guarantee for the allies of both sides, did not much ease the sting.

What no doubt made the treaty even more irksome to Hamilcar was that he himself had never suffered a defeat in action. Rather, in his six years as general he had inflicted more than one on the Romans. He would not have appreciated the criticism—a plausible one, nevertheless—that in six years he had in fact achieved little. His strategy of occupying a fortified coastal height, first Mt Heircte near Panormus, then Mt Eryx near Drepana, and harassing the Romans in lightning raids while they besieged the ports may have kept the garrisons' and Gisco's spirits up, might have prolonged the war, but was not a way to win it. Of course he could retort that that was all he could do with the forces he had. Anything more ambitious would have needed twice as many troops and Carthage could not afford them. But if so, prolonging the war was waste and folly. Now the republic paid for it.

Probably once the initial terms were struck Hamilcar brought his men down from Eryx. They may have joined the troops in Drepana and Lilybaeum or, if room in the ports was lacking, encamped close to one or both (they are only twenty-five kilometres apart). The Romans had wanted to make them hand over their arms and 'pass under the yoke', an old Italian rite to humiliate defeated foes—two upright spears with a third spear tied horizontally between them close to the ground—but their general had sufficiently impressed Lutatius into dropping these

demands. All the same the troops had more crucial things to worry about. Passing under a Roman spear-yoke would have been more of a humiliation to Hamilcar than to them. They wanted to be paid their arrears and go home. Hamilcar and they knew that this was going to be difficult.

He still had their confidence. He had led them for six years, never let them down, and shared all their dangers. To both his own troops from Eryx and the port garrisons he guaranteed full and proper payment of the arrears of pay that the republic owed. Perhaps he promised more, like bonuses for long service, compensation for equipment wear and tear or help for the foreign mercenaries in paying for their voyages home. Gisco no doubt seconded the guarantees. It was after all in Carthage's own interest to deal fairly with her time-expired troops, for nothing was more certain than that the republic would have fresh wars to fight in future. The troops, foreign mercenaries and Libyan (that is, North African) conscripts and volunteers, were mollified even though Hamilcar no doubt made it equally clear that the republic would need some time to meet their needs and that they would have to ship over to North Africa first.¹

The troops then had a shock. As soon as the peace was finally ratified, Hamilcar laid down his command, boarded a ship for Carthage and left. This was unusual, not to mention unhelpful, behaviour for a Carthaginian commander. Of course the army knew Gisco well and trusted him, but their general's abrupt self-removal from their midst

¹ On the close of the war, the peace negotiations and the promises to the army of Sicily see Pol. 1.60.1–63.3, 66.1, 66.12, 67.12; 3.27.2–6; Diod. 24.13–14; Nep. *Hamil.* 1.5; Zon. 8.17; App. *Iber.* 4.15, *Lib.* 5.18, *Sic.* 2.1–4; Eutrop. 2.27.2 (who gives the date for the Aegates battle as 10 March, 241); Oros. 4.11.1–2; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.126–7, 355; Huss (1985) 248–51; Scardigli (1991) 205–31; Seibert, *FzH* 83–95; Lazenby (1995) 150–9; Hoyos (1998) 118–21. Hamilcar's nickname: *baraq* 'lightning' is Phoenician, but Punic was a descendant of this language; see Sznycer (1978) 552–3. It might instead be connected with Phoenician *brk* (*barak*), 'to bless' (for this verb see Kramahlkov (2000) 126 (who does not register *baraq/brq*); Lipinski (1998) 496, though why such a widespread sentiment should give rise to a nickname for a specific person would be unclear.

The attitudes of Gisco and the troops are reconstructed from the actual events then and later, and from what Polybius and others report. 'Gisco no doubt seconded the guarantees': cf. Pol. 1.66.12, 'the promises which the generals had made [to the troops] when encouraging them in critical situations', though this also implies that such guarantees had been made earlier too—believable enough, for the men had not been properly paid for years. Acquaro (1989) 138 thinks that land too was promised; but this is unlikely, for such a reward is never mentioned in all the complex demands and bargaining that followed. See, though, Chapter 8 n. 1 on what the mercenaries may well have hoped for after a successful revolt.

must have seemed cavalier at best; and maybe also worrying. Gisco himself was perhaps taken by surprise even if Hamilcar left behind directions about how to proceed. But it was summer by now—around June—and the seas were open. He could consult with the authorities at Carthage on the steps he planned to take.

Hamilcar's conduct is not easy to explain, given our limited knowledge. Pride, and also concern for his reputation and maybe even life, may have been potent factors. He knew the state of the republic's finances, for his troops had not been paid in months or years. Just as important, it had been a long while since a Carthaginian general had been forced to accept defeat in war and then a harsh peace. Hamilcar knew what reception a defeated general was liable to undergo at Carthage. Hanno the loser in the recent sea-battle had just suffered the death penalty. His own critics and enemies at home were sharpening their political knives, if our scanty evidence is a guide. Hamilcar probably reckoned he had done what he had to do in Sicily and now must look after his own interests. Gisco, experienced and reliable, would have to see to the army.²

Gisco had to act with both care and speed. The troops must not be given the idea that he was dragging his feet. Nor the Roman officials in Sicily: one of the new consuls for 241, Lutatius' brother as it happened, arrived about this time with his brother as aide to inspect the island, and it would be wise not to upset them. At the same time the authorities at Carthage needed time to arrange payment and discharge for twenty thousand and more men. The saving grace was that the men were not unreasonable. They realised that the process would take time and they were willing to wait their turn. This has been doubted, but with little justification. After all, they were still prepared to negotiate later in Africa after months of waiting.

Gisco began sending them over to Carthage in separate units, each some time after the previous one. This would allow the home authorities to pay off the men unit by unit; the city need not be overburdened with inactive and restless soldiery, and the state could space out its payments in manageable fashion. True, this motive has been doubted too. The

² Hamilcar laid down command: Pol. 1.66.1, 68.12; Zon. 8.17; sound criticism by Seibert, *FzH* 94 n. 49. For Gómez (1996) 224–6, his retirement was *both* voluntary *and* forced—which simply amounts to saying that Hamilcar was realistic. 'Summer by now': the peace talks following the defeat at the Aegates in March would have taken time, but scarcely more than three months in all.

second-century B.C. Greek historian Polybius (our sole source) supposedly had no evidence for it, and supposedly again the real reason was just a lack of enough transports to ferry the army across at one go. Now, likely enough, the merchant marine was widely scattered, for it must have been early summer and merchants had to trade. Yet what Polybius reports of Gisco's thinking makes good sense, nor would he need to guess at it. One or more of his sources for the great revolt were probably eyewitnesses or knew eyewitnesses, who could relay not only Gisco's actions but the reasons for them.³

Gisco's careful planning depended, of course, on matching collaboration by the home authorities. It cannot have been long before he and his officers learned that these had let them down, but by then it was too late to halt the troop transfers. Gisco could only cross his fingers and hope that trouble would not follow.⁴

³ Gisco's staggered troop-transfers to Africa: Pol. 1.66.2–4. De Sanctis, 3.1.375 thinks the real reason was lack of enough ships for the whole army at once (cf. Meltzer, 2.369). Q. Lutatius Cerco and his brother Catulus in Sicily in 241: T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* 1 (1951) 219, with sources. Polybius' sources are reviewed in Chapter 24.

⁴ Admiral Hanno crucified: Zon. 8.17. An earlier Hanno in 264 had been put to death for letting himself be scared out of his occupation of Messana in Sicily (Pol. 1.11.5); as was the general who lost the battle of Panormus in 250 (Zon. 8.14; Oros. 4.9.15). Troops in 241 not unreasonable: Meltzer, 2.369, supposes them already mutinous, but the evidence is against this; cf. Loreto (1995) 47.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARMY OF SICILY

The troops, more than 20,000 in number, came from all over the Mediterranean. For a long time the republic had fought land wars with armies consisting partly of foreign mercenaries, partly of Libyans from the subject lands around Carthage. This freed Carthaginian citizens from regular military service, leaving them to man the fleets as needed. The army of Sicily in 241, as Polybius records, included Celts or Gauls, Ligurians (from north-eastern Italy), Baleares—renowned as deadly slingers—from the islands off the coast of Spain, and ‘mixed Greeks’, an obscure term. There were also some Italians, including deserters from the Roman side. All these were professional soldiers under contract. The largest number of troops were the Libyans.

This was the regular makeup of a Punic army of the era. In the Greek world of the eastern Mediterranean, mercenaries from the west were much fewer—though even an occasional Roman is found—Greeks and Greek-speakers were common, and in eastern armies the Gauls were mostly from Galatia where Celtic war-bands settled in the 270s. The Gauls or Celts in the army of Sicily came probably from Gaul and northern Italy, long settled by Gallic migrants.

Greeks were less common now in Punic armies, though at times numbers did enlist, as when the Carthaginians faced a Roman invasion of their heartland in 256–255. One of those was the Spartan soldier Xanthippus, who in practice took over command of the Punic army and destroyed the invaders. Greek mercenaries again are reported at Lilybaeum in 250. But many or most had left Punic service a decade later, no doubt as part of the Carthaginians’ military economising from 249 on. The only Greek or Greek-sounding troops in the army of Sicily in 241 were the ‘mixed Greeks’, *Mixellenes*, who can have numbered only a few thousand.¹

¹ ‘More than 20,000’ troops: Pol. 1.67.13. De Sanctis, 3.1.372, wrongly supposes that this figure is for the mutineers only and so numbers the original army at some 30,000. Contingents of the army of Sicily, with Libyans ‘the greatest part’ of it: Pol. 1.67.7; Diod. 25.2.2 (who, probably because of badly compressing Polybius, terms all

It is not clear who they were. If ‘mostly deserters and slaves’ as Polybius terms them, the slaves would most likely be absconders from the Greek regions of Sicily and south Italy. The term looks flexible enough to cover a man like the later rebel leader Spendius from Campania, a ‘slave deserter from the Romans’ according to Polybius. Identifying non-slave Greek deserters from Roman armies is more of a problem. After the earliest years of the war the Romans made no recorded use of Sicilian Greek allied troops. Their south Italian Greek allies did provide naval crews, but from late 249 to mid-242 no Roman warfleet was at sea. All the same, the Sicilian cities still had some military forces of their own, and the Romans probably relied on them to safeguard communications and depôts. Nor could ship-movements entirely cease, with Roman forces needing to be ferried to and from the island and supplied there, and such shipping would mainly be allied. Besides, Hiero of Syracuse continued to rule a small kingdom with its own armed forces, which would also suffer some desertions. Why Polybius should use the rather disdainful term *Mixellenes* is not obvious, but the group’s varied and dubious origins could explain it.

This should mean there were no ordinary Greek mercenaries still serving in the Punic army of Sicily (of course, there may have been a few whom Polybius ignores). Greek mercenaries were the best available, including at senior levels. Had there been a sizeable body of them in the army, it must be incredible that not one made himself noteworthy during the revolt that followed. By contrast it should be no surprise if the Carthaginians lost their Greek professionals in the years after 255. Precisely because they were the best, they had no need to keep renewing contracts with employers who could not pay them: there were plenty of wars and more cashed-up states in the east. Xanthippus himself left for eastern service. Any who stayed on would tend to be those with poor prospects elsewhere.

Mercenaries in Punic armies normally served, it seems, in national or ethnic contingents. The Baleares, expert slingers in relatively small companies, did, and likewise the Numidian horsemen who often formed a Punic army’s main cavalry force. So again did the Gauls in the army

the *Mixellenes* ‘slaves’). Spendius: Pol. 1.69.4; the Campanian name was probably Spedius (Walbank, 1.135; *Kl P* 5.301; cf. Huss (1985) 255 n. 19); Diodorus’ ‘Spondius’ (25.3.1, 5.2) is just a variant. Roman mercenaries in 3rd-Century Egypt: Gruen (1984) 675 n. 16. Carthage’s mercenaries: Ameling (1993) 212–5; Brizzi (1995) 308–12. Officers: Gsell, 2.390–3.

of Sicily. Commanders of mercenary contingents usually had the same origin as their men, though a general's immediate subordinates were Carthaginians like Gisco, or occasionally were from one of the Phoenician colonies and allies of Carthage in North Africa, such as Utica or Hippacra. The contingents fought in the style and with the armament of their homelands, and with varying discipline (Gauls were notorious for lack of it).²

Alexander's conquests, the continual wars that followed his death, and greater sophistication of war-methods had all intensified the demand for professional troops. Even most of the major powers could no longer meet their military needs solely with citizen volunteers or conscripts. The Carthaginians, wealthy and in control of a prosperous continental territory, were able to field successful combinations of mercenary and conscript forces, mainly to fight repeated wars against the Greeks of Sicily and then, from 264 to 241, the long-drawn-out struggle with the Romans for dominance of the same island.

Armies in long service often take on a character of their own, and especially mercenary armies. Paid soldiering was one of the few steady careers in the ancient world: not of course an easy one, yet with better prospects of profit and advancement for the average mercenary than an artisan's or farmer's or fisherman's. Men could serve for decades. Some of the notorious Gauls in Punic employ during the war with Rome turned up in the 220s working for—and as usual aiming to exploit—a new employer, the Adriatic Greek city of Epidamnus. Unruly mercenaries were just the sort of danger warned against by the experienced military writer Aeneas Tacticus in Greece over a century earlier. In turn long service, shared dangers, campfire tales and traditions, and

² Greek mercenaries hired in 256 are reported by Pol. 1.32.1; for Xanthippus see 1.32.1–36.4; Diod. 23.14–16; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.91–4. Greek troops at Lilybaeum in 250: Pol. 1.48.3. On the *Mixellenes* see Griffith (1935) 219; Walbank, 1.134; Acquaro (1989) 138; Ameling (1993) 220 n. 187; Loreto (1995) 117–18; Pelegrín Campo (2000) 73–5. Interpretations vary—Greek mercenaries from varied cities, mercenaries hired from Sicily and Greek south Italy or from other Italian regions, 'denatured' Greeks resident in Punic North Africa, or hellenised barbarians; none exactly as in text above. Gómez (1996) 230 n. 69 explains them, rather opaquely, as 'those who institutionalised the functioning of mercenary armies of the period according to Greek norms of Hellenistic tradition'. Pelegrín, 75, maintains that Polybius suppresses the participation of Greek mercenaries in the revolt because it was incompatible with his normal portrayal of Greek mercenaries abroad (68–72), but this idea needs better proof to be accepted.—Occasional senior officer from Punic North Africa: we know of Muttines of Hippacra, on Hannibal's staff in Italy (Livy 25.40.5).

knowing how important they were to their employers gave mercenary troops a strong esprit de corps.

Hellenistic-era soldiery earned both a standard pay, in Greek termed *misthos* or—by Polybius and others—*opsonion*, and an allowance for rations (*sitometria*), itself commonly paid in money and if so termed *sitarchia*. Cavalrymen were also entitled to rations, or else funds, for maintaining their horses. Wars being what they were, regular and full payment of these sums was all too often problematic for employers. Rations and ration-money were the most crucial in the short term. Unfed troops and animals were both a wasting asset and simultaneously a danger to their generals. Delays in *misthos*, on the other hand, were something troops were used to and prepared to tolerate, so long as they could count on receiving it eventually.³

As a rule only extreme circumstances caused mercenary forces (except perhap Gauls) to mutiny or desert. Prolonged failure with pay was the commonest cause, reasonably enough from the mercenaries' point of view. The army of Sicily had suffered these stresses. Both Hamilcar's predecessor Carthalo and then Hamilcar himself, who took command in 247, had had to take harsh measures—including killing numbers of mutineers—to re-establish obedience. Contrastingly, mercenaries could be loyal to the end, from devotion to their employer or sheer professionalism. Early in the 260s the mercenaries serving Hiero, the later king of Syracuse, fought the Mamertines of Messina to the death while Hiero disappeared safely from the battlefield with his citizen troops. The redisciplined mercenaries under Hamilcar remained in service year after year, even though unpaid and with prospects of victory (and its rewards) receding. They could have deserted to the Romans: one body—unsurprisingly, dissatisfied Gauls—did and were given custody of the wealthy and defenceless temple of Venus on the summit of Mt Eryx, which they happily plundered. But everyone else stayed loyal to their old employers and general.⁴

³ Problems of cities with mercenaries: Aen. Tact. *Poliorc.* 12–13; on Aeneas, cf. Whitehead (1990) 4–17; Bettalli (1990) 3–6. *Misthos*, *opsonion* and *sitarchia* (μισθός, ὀψώνιον, σιταρχία): the classic analysis is by Griffith (1935) 264–316. Various anecdotes of generals finding ways to pay, or avoid paying, their men in Pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics* 2.11.23–4, 29–30, 37, 39–40.

⁴ Mercenaries' mutinies in 248–247: Zon. 8.16. On Hiero and his mercenaries see Hoyos (1985) 48–51. The Gauls on Eryx, Pol. 1.77.4; the same unit at Epidamnus in 228, Pol. 2.7.7–10. Mercenaries' loyalty in Sicily till 241 also noted by Griffith, 216–17.

Devotion or principle would not be the sole reasons. Over years of service it was common for soldiers to find wives and have families, if they did not already have them when enlisting—or perhaps even when they had. The womenfolk of the army of Sicily must have been a widely mixed company, some from the mercenary units' homelands, others no doubt Sicilians or from Carthage's Libyan lands or allied cities. Some wives may even have been Carthaginians. The troops could not normally expect (or want) to have their families with them on campaign, least of all once Carthaginian-held ground shrank to a few scattered strongpoints. Hamilcar Barca's own family almost certainly stayed home in Carthage and the Libyan troops' wives and children in their home towns. The mercenaries' families most likely lived at Carthage too, or some there and others in nearby centres. When the troops gathered at Carthage on their return, it was easy for them to be reunited with their wives and children.⁵

The Carthaginians thus had an important hold on their mercenaries' loyalty. Not only were the families in practice hostages for their menfolk but, as time passed, many or most of the children were growing up among Carthaginians. Mercenaries who on discharge took their families back to their homelands strengthened the links between those lands and Carthage: a benefit for Carthaginian foreign policy and trade, and for future recruitment. Other ex-mercenaries and their families might sometimes be rewarded with land and residence in Punic North Africa itself, whether as citizens of Carthage or as foreign settlers. Such grants are not recorded in the sparse surviving evidence, but it was a common enough practice in other states to reward mercenaries with lifelong or hereditary landholdings—Egypt, another major employer in Mediterranean Africa, often did—and the Carthaginian republic had a tradition of sending out surplus population to settle and strengthen other towns under its rule.⁶

The Libyan soldiers in the army of Sicily outnumbered the mercenaries, but shared their past experiences and present concerns. A modern theory considers them mercenaries themselves, holding that

⁵ The soldiers' families: Chapter 4 below.

⁶ Land- and (sometimes) citizenship-grants to mercenaries: e.g. *OGIS* 229 lines 89–107 (Smyrna and Magnesia in Ionia, after 241); *OGIS* 338 ll. 12–19 (kingdom of Pergamum before 133); in Egypt, Pol. 5.65.10, *P. Hibeh* 81 and 110 ll. 70–74; inscriptions and papyri in Austin (1981), nos. 182, 211, 252, 247; cf. Préaux (1978) 1.311–12. Carthaginians sent out to other towns: Aristotle, *Politics* 1273b 18–20, 1320b 5–9; ignored by Law (1978) 132–3, 140–7.

the extra taxes which the Carthaginians were drawing from the Libyan communities had replaced military conscription, so that these Libyan troops were mercenary volunteers. But there is no evidence for this. It is perfectly conceivable that the Carthaginian state had both continued its conscription-demands and also imposed heavy taxes on its hard-pressed subjects.

Whether paid the same as the mercenaries, or less, it had been a long time since the Libyans had been paid at all. They had extra reason for wanting to the matter settled. Their home towns and villages had borne the financial brunt of Carthage's lost war. Even if the Carthaginians shouldered their share of the costs—and that is not at all certain—they had made sure to squeeze the maximum in taxes and contributions out of their subjects. Fifty per cent of the crops and double the pre-war tax on town-dwellers had been standard for years. It did not reduce the Libyans to penury but it certainly built up discontent. They were after all paying for a war which even if successful would benefit mostly the Carthaginians. Now the war was lost, a Roman indemnity had to be paid, and Carthaginian fortunes both public and private needed repair. The Libyans could confidently expect fresh demands from their rulers. The Libyan troops were well aware of all this. To return home with their accumulated funds would benefit their districts economically, not to mention would bring back a cadre of men experienced in dealing with the Carthaginians—vigorously, if need arose.⁷

The army of Sicily also included Carthaginian officers at higher-ranking levels (generals and lieutenant-generals), probably with some others from the allied cities, sometimes called Libyphoenicians. If there were companies of Carthaginian and Libyphoenician troops as well, we are not told and it seems unlikely. But the middle and junior officers' ranks—infantry divisional commanders or taxiarchs, company-commanders below them, and hipparchs of cavalry—were very likely a mixture. In the mercenary units they were normally of the same origin as their men, but it need not have been an automatic rule. In the Mediterranean east, citizen officers often commanded mercenary units. Young

⁷ On Libyans in Punic armies cf. Ameling, 210–11. Taxes on Libya, Pol. 1.72.1–3. Libyan troops also mercenaries: Griffith (1935) 219–20; Walbank, 1.134; Law (1978) 130; Scullard (1989) 567; Gómez (1996) 262. Rightly against this, Loreto (1995) 13–14. Griffith does not mention that the Libyan towns, and inevitably the countryside too, had been paying taxes before the First Punic War (Pol. 1.72.2; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.137; Huss (1985) 470).

Carthaginians and Libyphoenicians needed opportunities for military experience before being entrusted with higher commands. If citizen and allied contingents were few or lacking, they could be appointed to command Libyan conscript units and maybe some mercenary ones. This would help account for some of the events to follow.⁸

⁸ Citizen officers: Aen. Tact., *Poliorc.* 13.1–3. On taxiarchs (ταξίαρχοι) and company-commanders (λόχαγοι) cf. Whitehead (1990) 100–1, 162. On lesser officer posts in the 3rd-Century Ptolemaic army see Sekunda (1995) 2.4–6 (cf. 2.9–13 for the 2nd Century BC, after a Roman-style remodelling).

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICS, POLICIES AND POLITICIANS AT CARTHAGE

The state of politics in the republic of Carthage at this time is not well reported. We know only two important facts. First, the most prominent man in the state was Hanno, general in charge of Libya. Second, Hamilcar Barca, the returning general of Sicily, had many enemies.

Carthage was the pre-eminent trading, financial and imperial state of the west, though already Rome was not far behind. For centuries now she had been a republic, even if a nominal king continued to hold office (another obscurity). A century earlier Aristotle the philosopher and political scientist judged the republic to be an aristocracy with tinges both oligarchic and democratic. Citizens met in an elective and legislative assembly convened by one or other or both of the sufetes, the annual chief magistrates. The assembly had real capacities, besides elections. If sufetes and senate could not agree on a given proposal, it had to be referred to the citizens for discussion and presumably a vote. Equally, the sufetes and senate could jointly decide that a topic ought to be so referred. In the assembly, Aristotle takes pains to stress, citizens had complete freedom to discuss and to put their own proposals, in contrast to some other places where only the officials' topics and proposals could be handled (he could have mentioned Rome). Polybius in his turn declares that by Hannibal's time the people had the greatest say in affairs. All the same Aristotle plainly indicates that, if the magistrates and senate agreed on a course of action, they did not need to consult the citizen body. This is borne out by such evidence as we have. In 218, for instance, it was the sufetes and the senate who took the republic into the Hannibalic War against Rome.

Besides the sufetes there was a range of other elective offices, including the generals. The latter were elected for a particular war or war-theatre, not for a fixed term like civil magistrates. On the other hand an unsatisfactory general could be recalled to face prosecution and even the death penalty, as happened in 241 to the hapless Hanno who lost the battle of the Aegates islands.

The Carthaginian senate was called The Mighty Ones (*h'drm* or *hadrin*). It included an inner, perhaps executive, senatorial council of Thirty.

Institutions unique to the Carthaginians existed too. Aristotle stresses the importance of ‘pentarchies’, Boards of Five: powerful commissions which ran administrative affairs, co-opted their own membership and nominated members to the high court of the republic, the tribunal of One Hundred and Four. This was the court that could punish failed generals with death. When established in the fifth century its members were senators, according to the Augustan-age writer Pompeius Trogus; but by 196 we find ex-magistrates too joining it automatically. They probably were senators already, so at some stage the nominating rôle of the pentarchies must have been watered down or abolished.¹

The qualifications for senate membership and magistracies are not known, but Aristotle stresses that birth and wealth were both necessary. Another, stranger aspect was that one man could hold several offices simultaneously. But no example is known after Aristotle’s time, and possibly by Hamilcar’s it had been banned. Bribery was taken for granted, and on a scale to amaze Greeks and Romans, but to a Carthaginian in public life it no doubt seemed as natural as similar outlays did in eighteenth-century England.²

The picture is tolerably clear: a republic directed by a flexible ruling élite, in which distinguished ancestry was important so long as it was matched by financial resources, while as the other side of the coin newly-made riches could take a man to the top in power and repute. Yet what proportions the two groups formed in the élite, what other groupings there might have been, how widely they fluctuated over time, whether their sources of wealth differed at all—landowning compared

¹ For 3rd-Century Carthage see Huss (1985), especially chapters xxii–xxvii, and Lancel (1992), especially chapters iv–ix. For the wealth and commercial sophistication of 3rd-Century Rome: C.G. Starr, *The Beginnings of Imperial Rome: Rome in the Mid-Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1980). Carthage an aristocracy with other political tinges: Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.11, 1273a2–b7, 1273b18; 4.7, 1293b7–21; 5.12; Polybius 6.51.1–2; Cato the Elder, quoted by Servius, *ad Aen.* 4.682; Cicero, *Republic* 2.41–2; cf. Aristotle’s careless exaggeration at *Pol.* 1316b5 (a democracy). The kingship at Carthage: Ameling (1993) 67–97. Citizen assembly: Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.11, 1273a5–13; Polybius, *ibid.*; Szynger (1978) 581–84. The sufetes: Gsell, 2.193–200; Szynger, 567–76; Scullard (1989) 490–1. The senate: Huss, 462. Generals: Picard (1968) 115–23; Ameling, 83–117; Hoyos (1994) 249–56. Boards of Five: Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.11.4, 1273a13–20; cf. 3.1.7, 1275b12–13. Tribunal of 104: Aristotle, 2.11, 1272b34–37 (‘104’), 1273a14–15 (‘100’); Justin 19.2.5 (100 judges created from among the senators during the 5th Century); Livy 33.46.1–7 (*ordo iudicum* in 196); cf. Diod. 20.10.3–4 (4th-Century generals’ fear of ‘the court’, τῷ δικαστηρίῳ).

² Birth and wealth necessary: Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.11, 1273a21–30. Bribery: 1273a35–b7; Polybius 6.56.1–4. Plurality of offices: Aristotle, 1273b 8–10.

with commerce, for instance—and how far political competition might be influenced by the differences between them, our sources do not say. We can reasonably infer a good deal of political interplay and opportunism. Hamilcar claimed descent from a brother of Carthage's legendary founding queen Dido, or at any rate the later Latin poet Silius claims it for him, but this was no bar to him some years later allying with lower-class Carthaginians to advance his political position. Hanno, the other leading man of the time, is called 'the Great' by Appian. We do not know why, but there had been a mid-fourth century grandee thus named, which may suggest an established aristocratic house. If so, there were skeletons in its cupboard. The earlier Hanno the Great, the 'leading man' in the republic according to Pompeius Trogus, had been accused by a powerful rival of plotting a coup and was executed with his son. His descendant Bomilcar then attempted a coup when general in 308 and had to be forcibly suppressed. None of this impeded the younger Hanno's ascent to eminence sixty years on.³

Hanno and Hamilcar were young men, between thirty and forty. Cornelius Nepos, Hamilcar's mini-biographer, terms him 'quite a young man' when appointed general in Sicily in 247, the year his first son Hannibal was born. He already had one or more daughters, so was plainly not a mere youth. Hanno the Great, who was to become the proverbial political foe of Barca and his family, is recorded as still alive in 216 and then in 202. Four decades earlier, and general in command of Libya, he too must have been not far into middle age. It is noteworthy that the republic could have men in the early prime of life holding its two top military commands. Not only were they personally vigorous

³ Alleged descent of Hamilcar: Silius, *Pun.* 1.71–6, 15.745–8. That Dido's brother is named as Barca, which was Hamilcar's nickname, suggests that the claim dates from Hamilcar's lifetime and Silius read of it in his usual source Livy, who in turn drew on one of the Hannibal-writers, like Silenus. Hamilcar's political alliances: Diod. 25.8; App. *Iber.* 4.16; Hoyos (1994) 260–2. Hanno the Great: App. *Iber.* 4.16; Zon. 8.22. Fourth-century Hanno the Great: Aristotle, *Pol.* 5.6.2, 1307a4; Pompeius Trogus, *Prologue* 20; Justin 21.4 ('princeps Carthaginiensium', while his rival Suniatus was 'potentissimus Poenorum'), 22.3.6–9; Polyæn. 5.11; Lenschau, *RE* 7 (1912) 2353–4. Bomilcar's attempted coup: Diod. 20.43.1–44.6; Justin 22.7.7. On these 4th-Century men see Gsell, 2.245–52; Whittaker (1978) 78–9, 88–9; Huss, 161 n. 44, 195, 499. App. *Lib.* 68.304 seems to mention another Hanno the Great in the mid-2nd Century. If genuine (cf. Gsell, 2.282) this Hanno might prove the longevity of the family in public life, but Appian's accuracy is uncertain. Even without this third Hanno the Great, the recurrence of the epithet suggests not a reward for military prowess (as Loreto, 78, 'connessa al carattere rilevante delle conquiste di Annone') but perhaps a family significance—and possibly this was mistranslated into Greek.

and talented but they must have been supported by other politically influential Carthaginians.⁴

Hanno had not fought overseas but made his name in North Africa. Around 247 he captured an inland town that Polybius and Diodorus call Hecatontapylus or Hecatompylus ('Hundred Gates'), identified as the Roman Theveste, today's Tebessa. In Roman times this was the territory of the Numidian Musulamii, but Numidian tribal groupings were often changeable. By the Roman period the easternmost Numidians, the Massyli, and their western kinsfolk the Masaesyli, seem to have shrunk, splintered or been renamed, with new groupings like the Musulamii appearing. In the mid-third century Theveste probably lay in southern Massylian territory. It was not the first Carthaginian conquest of Numidian land but definitely the farthest. The town lay 260 kilometres as the crow flies south-west of Carthage in fertile uplands, the eastern reaches of the Aurès massif, and had a large population from whom the general exacted 3,000 hostages. Otherwise he treated the place generously and received their ovations. His men were welcomed, Diodorus assures us, as guests rather than conquerors. It all throws interesting light on Hanno's diplomatic skills.⁵

This seems to have been an expedition to extend the Carthaginians' continental territories at a time when the war with the Romans was at a standstill and financial difficulties had arisen. His army was presumably what remained of the one that, thanks to Xanthippus, had defeated the Roman invaders in 255. Some troops had been then sent

⁴ Hamilcar's age in 247: Nep. *Ham.* 1.1, 'admodum adolescentulus'; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.80; Huss, 228 n. 74; Lancel (1995) 23. Family: Hanno son of Bomilcar, seemingly a daughter's son, was in at least his twenties by 218 (below, n. 11) and around 240 Hamilcar promised another daughter to a Numidian prince as a bride (below, Chapter 13). Hanno the general the same as Hanno the Great: Lenschau, *RE* 7 (1912) 2355–7; cf. Gsell, 2.252–3; *DCPP* 208–9 (W. Huss); Loreto (1995) 78. He was enterprising, keen for renown, and patriotic, according to Diod. 24.10.1. Loreto too puts his age in 247 around 30: (1995) 78. Hanno the Great in 216 and 202: Livy 22.12.6–13.6; App. *Lib.* 49.213.

⁵ Capture of Hecatompylus: Pol. 1.73.1, cf. 74.7; Diod. 4.18.1 (stressing its size and prosperity), 24.10.2; Huss (1985) 246 n. 232; *DCPP* 442–3 s.v. 'Tébessa' (E. Lipinski); Lancel (1992) 279, 284. Veith (1912) 528 oddly claims that Hanno destroyed ('zerstört') the town. Hecatompylus = Theveste: thus St Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians* 2; Gsell, 2.95–6; H. Treidler, 'Theveste', *RE* 11 (1936) 251; *DCPP* 442; M. LeGlay, *KIP* 5.768; Law (1978) 129, 169. On Tebessa's fertile upland region see Fentress (1979) 32–3, 182, who wavers between it, Capsa and Cirta being Hecatompylus—but elsewhere emphasizes Theveste's strategic importance (69); on this see also Treidler, 250. Musulamii and Theveste: Fentress, 65–8, 73–7. Changeability of Numidian tribal groupings and names: Fentress, 43–7.

back to Sicily and some perhaps discharged, while campaigning had followed to subdue hostile Numidians. But that too was now some years in the past. Hanno's army, according to Diodorus, was idle as well as expensive and he wanted to put it to good use. In other words by 247 there had been no campaigning for some time. His army would not have been much above 8,000 strong, with part perhaps needed to garrison strongpoints. Still, four or five thousand men would be enough in the field, especially if many were still Greek mercenaries. Diodorus elsewhere writes of 'notable forces' under 'good generals' (the latter an obvious rhetorical plural) taking Hecatompylus, which slightly fortifies the inference of Greek troops. Hanno may have supplemented them too with some citizen cavalry and infantry. After his victory, though, his army shrank further, for late in 241 the only noteworthy force under arms in Punic Africa was not his but the one brought from Sicily.⁶

Besides keenness for personal fame, Diodorus affirms that Hanno wanted to bring 'renown and benefit' to his homeland. We can infer that by 247, in the trough of the war in Sicily, the republic was looking for added revenues and opportunities through expanding inland. This aim was quite compatible with treating Hecatompylus mildly. Very likely too it was a policy initiated by Hanno and his political supporters. The Hecatompylus expedition was probably an energetic new general's first big enterprise on taking up the Libyan command.

Hecatompylus-Theveste remained the furthest inland point of Punic rule. On one view it was a Punic-held stronghold surrounded by independent Numidian territory, and so not a firm marker of expansion. But the value of such an exposed unit, easy for hostile Numidians to cut off and hard to succour if they did, is not clear; nor how well it would fit in with Hanno's aims of renown and national benefit, which (Diodorus' excerpt implies) were achieved. The argument that between Punic-ruled Libya and Theveste the lands of the towns Thugga and Zama were independent rests on evidence from the later second century B.C. and Roman times. By 150 most of western Libya had been taken from the Carthaginians by the aggressive, and Roman-favoured, Masinissa, king of a now united Numidia. Drawing assumptions from

⁶ Financial difficulties in the 240s: Pol. 1.58.9; Diod. 24.10.1; App. *Sic.* 1, reporting a failed effort to borrow 2,000 talents from Egypt. Dispersal of army of Libya after 255: Griffith (1935) 215–16. Of 16,000 original troops 800 or more were killed (Pol. 1.34.9) and 5,500 originally from Sicily were sent back, presumably minus casualties. Hostile Numidians (and less plausibly 'Mauretanians') subdued after 255: Oros. 4.9.9.

this about mid-third century borders is questionable. Thugga in fact seems to have been under Punic rule in the time of the Syracusan invader Agathocles, seventy years earlier: it is the best identification for 'Tocae', a 'fine large city' in the inland mountains which his forces captured in 307. Conceivably enough Theveste stood on a different and better footing vis à vis the Carthaginians than did the subject Libyans. Hanno's mild dealings with the place imply this. They were perhaps accepted as allies rather than subjects, even if in practice they still had to pay tribute or taxes and submit to military levying. A more tangible concession would be to set them a lump (and moderate) sum as tribute rather than the Libyans' particularised poll- and land-taxes, but this is a guess.⁷

The fortress-town of Sicca too (modern Le Kef), again in Numidian territory, a hundred kilometres north-east of Theveste, fifty west of Thugga and Zama, and 180 from Carthage, was under Punic control by 241. Sicca on its mountainside overlooked fertile upland plains close to the river Muthul, today's Mellègue, an important tributary of the Bagradas (Mejerda). For the same reasons as with Theveste, it should not be seen as a military outpost surrounded by independent territory. Its acquisition most probably dates to the same period as Theveste's. An earlier date is not impossible, but not as much as a century or half a century earlier, for like Theveste Sicca makes no appearance in earlier Punic wars or expansions.

By contrast the two towns match neatly as the apexes of two lines of advance. Had Sicca been annexed in the aftermath of the Roman invasion, it is hard to see why the army of Africa was then left idle when Theveste lay not that far away. Rather likelier, Sicca was the second of Hanno's exploits, unrecorded by any surviving extract from Diodorus. Not only did he gain new territories for Carthage, but he strengthened the western frontiers against the unpredictable Numidian

⁷ Theveste an isolated outpost: Picard, *LDC* 89, 122 n. 39, cf. 263; but see Nicolet (1978) 2.597–98. Hoyos (1994) 266 and Loreto (1995) 58 n. 76 leave the question open. Numidian and later inscriptions: Picard (1966) 1257–62; Fentress, 50–2; Lancel (1992) 279–83. Tocae (Τῶκαι) in 307: Diod. 20.57.4; Gsell, 2.49–50; Huss, 197; Consolo Langher (1992) 28, 46–7, and (1997) 215; *DCPP* 135 (Y. Thébert). Picard's belief that the Massyli of eastern Numidia dwelt around Thugga and Zama is unconvincing: Strabo 17.3.9 and 13 (C829, 832), puts their western border (i.e. with the Masaesyli) at Cape Treton, modern C. Bougaroun due north of Cirta/Constantine (Ptol., *Geog.* 4.3.3); cf. Huss (1985) 360; Biffi (1999) 391, 401. Scullard, *CAH*² 7.503, also sees Thugga as part of Punic Africa by the 3rd Century. On Hanno's efficient ruthlessness in Libya: Pol. 1.72.3, 74.1.

peoples beyond, and so made the exploitation of Libya more secure. Naturally he was held in the highest esteem at Carthage.⁸

Hanno followed victory in the interior with efficient and productive administration in Punic-ruled Libya. Productive, that is, for the republic; but bitterly oppressive to the Libyans, for Hanno was merciless when it came to exacting their ever-increasing taxes. Whether they had been doubled before he took command or were doubled at his instigation, his supervision meant much more thorough collection. Even the poor, Polybius writes, were allowed no exemptions or reductions. And such efficiency had to be accompanied by unforgiving investigation and punishment of Libyans who defaulted. Defaulters, whatever their excuses, were dragged away to prison in front of their wives and daughters. The Libyans suffered and smouldered.⁹

When the time came in 242 to gather troops to serve aboard the fleet for Sicily, this would be another task for him as general in Libya. Many if not all the troops would be Libyan conscripts again, this time poorly trained and with no battle experience, as Polybius notes. Thousands drowned and thousands more were captured in the disaster at the Aegates under the general's namesake, Hanno the admiral. Hanno the Great could not be blamed for this. His own contrasting achievements no doubt strengthened his and his supporters' political pre-eminence at Carthage. Meanwhile, though, they had added to the Libyans' resentment against their rulers.¹⁰

How Hamilcar stood in relation to Hanno's political circle is hard to divine. His own appointment as general in Sicily implies that he too had high political and personal standing in 247. We need not assume that the two generals were enemies. If they had been, the one appointed first could have impeded the nomination of the other; or Hanno—once

⁸ Sicca seen as another outpost: Picard, *LDC* 89, 263; Lancel, 279; Loreto, 57 n. 71, who points out the topographical relationship (58–60, 227 Map 1); cf. Gómez (1996) 260. It is not likely that Punic territories stretched as far west as Sicca as early as 310, as Consolo Langher (1992) 23 holds. If they had, the exclusion of Theveste until the 240s is hard to explain. Hanno's high reputation at Carthage: Pol. 1.72.3, 73.1. Sicca's temple and priestesses of the Phoenician goddess of fertility, Astarte, later notorious for ritual prostitution (Val. Max. 2.6.15; Gsell, 4.257 n. 5, 403), were most likely established at some date after the Punic conquest, but there are no archaeological remains from this period (*DCPP* 410 (Y. Thébert)).

⁹ Carthaginians' harsh tax régime in Libya: Pol. 1.72.1–5; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.137; Sznycer (1978) 598, 602; Huss (1985) 470.

¹⁰ Punic shipboard troops (τὰ ἐπιβατικά) at the Aegates: Pol. 1.61.5; cf. Medas (1999).

his run of military and governmental success was well started—could have pushed for Hamilcar to be replaced by someone more friendly to himself. Nor would Hamilcar have been granted plenipotentiary negotiating powers after the Aegates by a republic dominated by an enemy faction. It is more plausible to see them either as ambitious but co-operative young leaders, each with his own group of supporters of high and low rank in public life, or possibly as senior partners within one large group which around 247 became the dominant one in Carthage's affairs.

Hanno's generalship, at least once he had launched his westward enterprise, brought hugely more rewards and renown than Hamilcar's difficult command in Sicily. This was a reversal of past experiences. Sicily and overseas expeditions generally had been the active theatre while Africa saw only intermittent border-warfare with varying Numidian peoples. The change was neither leader's doing but the result of how the war with the Romans had progressed into stalemate after seventeen years' fluctuations. In contrast to it, as suggested just now, the drive into Numidia was probably Hanno's initiative. Meanwhile Hamilcar went to Sicily with a new approach to fighting the Romans. It proved finally unsuccessful, but he and his countrymen cannot have known this in advance. The two men, in short, had taken the commands that each thought most suitable to him. This points to amicable collaboration or, at any rate, constructive competitiveness.

By 241 their political standings had changed. Hanno had glory and popular approval, and in time-honoured Carthaginian style some of the wealth he was extracting no doubt stayed in his own strongboxes, to help nourish his political connexions. Hamilcar returned without much renown or money, negotiator of a treaty of defeat and ex-general of an army that had become a financial encumbrance—not to mention a physical nuisance at Carthage itself. He may even have been prosecuted before the tribunal of One Hundred and Four. Appian, who all too often is a confused chronicler of Punic affairs, has such a trial years later, on charges of misconduct while in Sicily, but after the great rebellion in Libya. The chronology of events makes this virtually impossible. Nor by 237 was Hamilcar at the same low ebb: instead he was the saviour of the state, politically secure enough to lead his veteran army over to Spain while still dominating the affairs of the republic in Africa through kinsmen and allies. Appian or his source seems to have confused this second postwar period with the first.

The prosecution, if launched, collapsed. Hamilcar saved himself by cultivating ‘the leading men’ or, translated differently, ‘the men in power’, according to Appian (still dating it to 237). The only leading man named as Barca’s ally is Hasdrubal, soon to be his son-in-law. Appian describes him as ‘the most popular’ of the leading men. Hasdrubal no doubt was already a valuable supporter in 241 when the rescue more likely occurred. One other notable supporter can be identified, at least by name: an aristocrat called Bomilcar. In 218 Hamilcar’s son Hannibal had an able cavalry commander named Hanno son of Bomilcar ‘the king’ (as Polybius calls him), whom Appian terms Hannibal’s nephew. If Appian is right about their kinship—and it is an odd thing for even Appian to make up—this nephew must have been the son of a sister of Hannibal’s, and cannot have been less than twenty years old at the minimum in 218. Before 238 therefore Hamilcar must have had two daughters old enough to be married, one to Hasdrubal and one to Bomilcar. Why Polybius should single out the latter husband as ‘the king’ is just as opaque as why Hanno should be particularised as ‘the Great’. But Bomilcar plainly was another high-ranking Carthaginian. He will have been another of ‘the leading men’ who helped his father-in-law or prospective father-in-law defeat the charges, and he then made him a grandfather.¹¹

¹¹ Hamilcar prosecuted unsuccessfully in 237: App. *Iber.* 4.16, claiming he was saved by cultivating τοὺς πολιτευομένους, on the meaning of which cf. Loreto (1995) 208–9. Appian’s date accepted by Loreto, 205–10; dated instead to 241 by Seibert, *Hann.* 13–14, and Hoyos (1994) 260–2; cf. Hoyos (1995). Seibert places the trial after the outbreak of the revolt and due to it; Gómez (1996) 222–3 imagines that Appian himself dates the prosecution to 241. Diodorus on Hamilcar’s post-revolt politics: Diod. 25.8. Hamilcar opposed by the majority of the ruling élite or its dominant faction: thus de Sanctis, 3.1.376–7; Gsell, 2.253–6, 260; Picard, *Hann.* 60, 68. Picard in particular views Hamilcar’s faction as democratically inclined: *Hann.* 75–7; (1968) 114–15, 120–3, 125–9; *LDC* 202–16; also Huss (1985) 270, 426–7, 463; Lancel (1992) 53–4; Barceló (2004) 64–5. For more nuanced views, see for instance Picard’s earlier interpretation, (1961) 22–3, 206; T. Kotula, ‘Hannibal-Sufet und seine vermeintlich demokratische Reform in Karthago’, *Rivista Storica dell’Antichità* 13–14 (1983–84) 96–8; Hoyos (1994), and (2003) 47–8, 50–2.—Hanno, son of Bomilcar ὁ βασιλεὺς, Pol. 3.42.6; as Hannibal’s nephew, App. *Hann.* 20.90. On this Bomilcar cf. B. Niese, *RE* 3 (1899) 680, ‘Bomilcar (3)’; Picard (1968) 117–18 supposes him a major powerbroker around 240.

Greek authors who mention βασιλεῖς or a βασιλεύς at republican Carthage seem to mean the sufetes: Huss (1983), and (1991) 118–23. But there were two sufetes every year (and perhaps more). Unless Polybius means that Bomilcar was holding the office in 218 itself—but he does not say this—it still is not clear why he should single him out (cf. Picard (1968) 117–18, with a different inference). On Punic votive tablets the epithet ‘sufete’ is very common (Snyzer (1978) 570–5). It could apparently be kept

Hanno the Great's view of the prosecution is not known. All the same if he really was Barca's enemy he could have brought pressure to bear to make it go ahead. If he did try to make sure and yet failed, somehow an inexplicable turnaround in the two men's political standing had occurred—Hanno suffering a serious blow to his predominance thanks to the inglorious returnee Hamilcar. And after that we would have to infer a second turnaround, for when the revolt broke out it was Hanno again who took command against the enemy, with no campaigning rôle for Hamilcar. This scenario is scarcely convincing. The prosecution's failure implies, instead, that the most powerful man in the state gave it no support. Quite likely he took Hamilcar's side, seconding the efforts of Hasdrubal, Bomilcar and other notables. Hamilcar's enemies cannot have been anything but a minority in the ruling élite. Though under a temporary cloud because of Sicily, the rally to save him from attack shows he was still a force in politics. The field command that followed some while after is more evidence of vigorous friends, allies and rebuilt connexions. We shall see, too, that he was not idle in the interim.¹²

The only other known Carthaginian of high rank in 241 was of course Gisco. His political links are not reported but he was important enough to become the republic's negotiator with the army of Sicily a few months on. The most natural inference is that he was a friend of Hamilcar's or at least a tried and true military colleague. If neither, he would hardly have been appointed commandant of Lilybaeum. At the same time Hamilcar had no compunction about saddling him with the hard and risky task of dealing with their unpaid army. Colleague or friend, Gisco was ultimately expendable. We may see him as an aristocrat with perhaps a small circle or following of his own, one that formed part of the bigger oligarchic grouping (or groupings) around Hamilcar and Hanno.

In the decade or so before the Aegates other notables had played major rôles. Adherbal, general in Sicily in 249, and Himilco the then commandant at Lilybaeum had won major victories by sea and land over the Romans. Adherbal's naval colleague Carthalo had destroyed

honorifically by ex-sufetes, like American ex-presidents. Polybius or Polybius' source may then be reflecting this Punic usage without appreciating it.

¹² That Hanno and Hamilcar were enemies from the start is the usual view: e.g. Gsell, 2.252–5; de Sanctis, 3.1.376–7, 390–3; Groag (1929) 22–3; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.134; Picard, *Hann.* 60–1; Caven (1980) 68–9; Seibert, *Hann.* 25; Gómez (1996) 216–17, 224, 349–50. Sceptical: Hoyos (1994) 264–6; Loreto (1995) 85.

another Roman fleet that same year and in 248 went on to raid Italian coasts. All three then vanish from the record. So does the general who around 250 had warred successfully on the hostile Numidians, another Hamilcar (not Barca, for in 250 this Hamilcar's son Hannibal was Adherbal's naval subordinate). It is rather improbable that they were all dead by 241. More likely the appointments of Hanno and Hamilcar to the generalships of Libya and Sicily—with lieutenants unknown apart from Gisco—marked the ousting of one previously dominant group in the republican oligarchy by another. Of course, in the life-or-death struggle in Punic Africa which was to follow 241, these former leaders perhaps made themselves available for subordinate tasks, as ex-consuls and ex-dictators at Rome were to do so amidst the crises of the Second Punic War. Our sources, though, do not mention them, unless Adherbal's old lieutenant was the same Hannibal who was to figure briefly as Hamilcar's. In any case they were no longer leading figures in the war-effort. This is a small extra pointer to the new military leaders, Hanno and Hamilcar, co-operating to achieve political dominance for themselves and their own supporters.¹³

Hanno is often seen as the proponent of a programme of expansion and exploitation in Africa, and in turn as the chief opponent of continuing the Roman war and, later, of Punic power expanding into Spain: thus necessarily as an adversary of Hamilcar's. The theory draws on limited facts. He was a successful general in Africa while the republic cut back its efforts in Sicily; he later fell out with Hamilcar; and he continued to be the proverbial chief critic of Hamilcar and Hamilcar's successors, especially once these got Carthage into a new Roman war. Still, these items fall short of making him an Africa-centred champion. The stalemated and costly first war with Rome forced the Carthaginians to find large extra revenues and this could be done in only two ways: levying heavier taxes on their subject lands and making more lands subject to taxes. Both could be done in Africa only, and both were done by the general in command there. Hanno's views on how the republic could increase revenues and possessions after the war are not known. They need not have ruled out overseas imperialism.

¹³ Gisco a close associate of Hamilcar's: Loreto, 80–2, 85. An enemy: Picard, *Hann.* 65, 68. For Adherbal's and others' exploits see Caven (1980) 46–56. Hamilcar, the earlier general in Libya, and his son Hannibal: Pol. 1.44.1; Oros. 4.9.9; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.80, 108–9. Lenschau identifies him with Barca, unconvincingly (*RE* 7 (1912) 2302–3, relying on Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.97; Zon. 8.10).

At some stage between 241 and 237 Hamilcar Barca sponsored the idea of expanding into Spain. The chronology of events, with the great revolt ending late in 238 or at the start of 237, and Hamilcar landing at Gades in about the early summer of 237, implies that planning for the project began before the end of the revolt. Whether Hamilcar already had it in mind on returning from Sicily in 241 cannot of course be determined, but it is possible enough. Then, towards the end of the revolt, he must have given thought to what policies would restore the republic's fortunes and, just as vital, maintain his own political position.

Numidia had potential, but lofty mountains and steppes divided up the most fruitful areas across vast distances. Besides, further operations in that direction would almost unavoidably force him to give Hanno, with whom he had quarrelled by then, a rôle or else—if he met with less than brilliant success—might prompt the republic to replace him with Hanno. Spain offered fertile lands, well-developed communities, opportunities to develop trade further and, even more important, silver and gold waiting to be extracted. Spain was also an area to which Hanno had no superior claim. In other words Hamilcar's interest in the peninsula was aroused, likely enough, not by distaste for his home continent but by political calculations. Hanno's criticisms of Hamilcar and his successors, in turn, were probably due not to a dislike of overseas ventures as such—these had been Carthage's stock-in-trade from its foundation—but to dislike of how Hamilcar's group was doing them. Or even more pointedly, to bitterness that it was Barca and his friends doing it and not Hanno with his.¹⁴

This was in the future. In summer 241 by contrast nothing suggests that the two men were at loggerheads. Hamilcar's standing was low and he needed Hanno's help, or at least neutrality, to avert ruin. Hanno in the meantime had a more vital job to do: deal with the increasingly worrisome army of Sicily.

¹⁴ Hanno as Africa-only champion: rejected by Hoyos (1994) 260–2, 270–1, discussing earlier views; ignored by Gómez (1996) 216–17, 347–53, who asserts the traditional view. Chronology of events: Hoyos (2000).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARMY OF SICILY AT CARTHAGE

Gisco's careful staggering of the army's transfer to Africa, contingent by contingent, was nullified by the insouciance of the authorities at Carthage. They failed to find the means to pay off each contingent in turn and arrange for the mercenaries' travel home. Instead the soldiery was quartered in ever-growing numbers in the city itself, while the magistrates and senate, and inevitably Hanno the general in Libya, discussed how to handle them.

The stumbling-block was of course the arrears owed. Polybius, frustratingly, omits even to hint at how much they amounted to by either the Carthaginians' reckoning or the soldiers'. But he explains the Carthaginians' attitude succinctly. They were short of funds because of their recent costs (which had ended in the disaster at the Aegates Islands) and were 'confident that they could beg off part of the arrears of pay from the mercenaries, if they gathered and received them all into Carthage.' The idea, it follows, was to impress on the men how expensively numerous they were and therefore how little hope they ought to have of getting their back pay in full. It might also be possible—the Punic authorities might calculate—to play off one contingent against another so as to beat down all their claims.¹

This also explains why even the Libyan contingents were kept in being. Most of them must have belonged to towns or districts only some days' travel from the city. They could have been sent home on furlough and then recalled when funds were ready. That would have reduced the army to well under half its present strength and moreover, from a hardheaded Carthaginian point of view, would have weakened the Libyans' collective bargaining power. The opportunity was passed over. Soon enough, no doubt, the Libyans themselves realised that strength lay in cohesion and made up their minds to stay with their foreign confrères.

¹ Carthaginians 'confident etc.': 1.66.5 (my translation).

Polybius reports that the men's families were with them in the city. He does not except the Libyans, yet at first sight this seems odd. After all their homes were mostly not that distant. Either he really means just the mercenaries, foreigners all, but carelessly leaves that unsaid, or the Libyans' families were in fact encouraged to join them at Carthage. The former explanation is not as likely as the latter, for it would have been much harder to keep the Libyan troops at Carthage if only their mercenary comrades were allowed to have their families there. Similarly the point Polybius soon afterwards stresses, about the troops being required to take their families with them to Sicca, would make much less sense. The Libyans would, improbably, have had to gather theirs up from their home towns; or else their families were not with them at Sicca at all but in their home districts, virtually as hostages to the Carthaginians—exactly what Polybius reports as not happening.

A reason for encouraging the Libyans' families to join them can be inferred. The Carthaginians might well reckon that wives and children would put added pressure on all the troops to settle quickly. The men needed to arrange their affairs and satisfy their families' wants after years of absence. It might push them towards settling their claims at a discount, or so at any rate the Carthaginians might hope.

Appian tells a story of the Punic authorities putting to death 3,000 Libyan deserters who were handed back by the Romans, but this is fiction. The peace terms did require the handing back of Roman deserters by the Carthaginians—not a proviso meticulously obeyed, to judge from the notorious example of Spendius the Campanian, whom we shall meet soon—but no *quid pro quo* is recorded. Even if, improbably, a handover of Libyan deserters happened, the supposed mass slaughter is outside belief. Letting the army of Sicily, Libyans included, into Carthage while (or after) killing thousands of their former comrades would have been folly. Besides, the Libyan troops showed no recorded resentment at the supposed killings. The whole army continued expecting an amicable settlement of its claims, and Polybius leaves the 'killings' totally out of his account—even when detailing the Libyan communities' bitter and justified grievances against Carthage. The item must be a hostile invention Appian took from an anti-Carthaginian writer.²

² Appian's massacre-story, *Sic.* 2.8; accepted by Loreto (1995) 89. The peace treaty (cf. Chapter I note 1) required the Carthaginians to give up their Roman prisoners—and deserters according to the rather tenuous testimony of Appian and Zonaras—but not vice versa: against Scardigli (1991) 224 see Hoyos (1998) 119, 124, 131. Appian's few

Hanno may have originated the idea of keeping the army on at Carthage in the hope of wearing down its expectations. Certainly he agreed with the tactic, for the scheme to have the troops cool their heels in the city and be bargained down could not go ahead against his wishes. As general in Libya—in fact as the only Carthaginian general at present—he was the ranking military chief of the republic. Gisco, still in Sicily sending troops over, was only in charge there for practical purposes. Nothing indicates that he had formally replaced his old superior as general in Sicily. The veterans arriving from Sicily had to be Hanno's responsibility. His crucial rôle is confirmed by the fact that he was the negotiator when bargaining started with them.

It did not start right away. The Carthaginian authorities put off discussions on the plea that sorting out the arrears would take time and there were other units still to arrive from Sicily. But privately they may have started hinting to the army's officers that the men should consider settling for reduced payouts. This was after all the point of keeping the troops in the city. As events were to show, many of the officers were well-disposed to the Carthaginians—and would suffer for it when the situation got out of hand. Officers were better-paid, sometimes of higher social rank back home than their men and often more educated, and they had long been trusted by their Punic generals. Some, as we saw earlier, were probably Carthaginians and Libyphoenicians. Others, of the same origins as their men, might yet be willing to compromise with their employers, whose difficulties they could appreciate. During the army's time at Carthage, all the same, any such Punic pressures got nowhere.³

We can make a rough estimate what the mercenaries were due. The evidence all comes from the Greek world. In the third-century eastern Mediterranean the ordinary infantryman's pay, *opsonion* in Greek, was some 8 obols or one-and-a-third Attic drachmas a day. When troops were paid *sitarchia*, ration-money, instead of rations in kind, it varied in value but seemingly was between a third and a half of the *opsonion* rate (though in a standing army like Egypt's it might even outdo *opsonion* in

references to the Mercenaries' War are quite anti-Carthaginian in tone and content: cf. Chapter 24. Loreto, 21–7, sees one of his sources as Roman, perhaps Fabius Pictor, a contemporary of the events; and the other as pro-Libyan but not Roman.

³ Hanno's attitude to the army of Sicily: similarly Loreto (1995) 47–8. Authorities put off discussions: note Pol. 1.66.6, army leaders were later on asked to take their men to Sicca 'until matters concerning their pay were readied and they received those left behind (τοὺς ἀπολειπομένους)'.

value). Officers and cavalrymen naturally received more, though again rates varied. What the Libyan conscript troops were paid is not known at all, but since they were neither mercenaries nor allied citizens they were very probably paid at lower rates.

Only a tentative estimate can be made for the army's total *opsonion*, but it is better than nothing. If we assume for the sake of calculation that there were some 8,500 mercenaries and some 12,500 Libyans, for a total of 'over twenty thousand' men, and leave out higher rates for officers and cavalrymen for the moment, then one day's pay for the mercenaries alone, at one and a third drachmas, would total 11,333 drachmas. For the Libyans—paid, say, 6 obols or one drachma—it would be another twelve and a half thousand. The daily *opsonion* for the army, then, would total just under 24,000 drachmas. This calculation should be within the right range.⁴

There may have been some light-armed infantrymen in the army, and such troops were paid less, but on the other hand officers and cavalrymen had higher rates. Their numbers are again unknown, but in a third-century army roughly one in ten can be estimated as cavalry. Again for calculation's sake, we may suppose that there were 800 mercenary and 1,200 Libyan cavalry in the army, and that both were paid at the one rate, say two drachmas a day. Their and the officers' higher pay-rates can be approximately offset against the lower pay for light-armed troops, to put the army's total *opsonion* at slightly more than 25,500 drachmas a day. Over a month this would amount to 765,000 drachmas, or a little over 127 talents. Over a year, 1,530 talents.⁵

⁴ Mercenary pay in 3rd Century: Gsell, 2.355; Griffith (1935) 294–316; Launey, 2.724–94, especially 750–80, with tables at 757 and 776; Préaux (1978) 1.306–7. Lower pay for Libyan troops: so too Gsell, *ibid.* In 263–262 in north-western Greece, cavalry pay is recorded as 2 drachmas a day (Launey, 752–3, 757); the 30 obols or five drachmas a day recorded in 303–302 (*ibid.* 751–2) probably reflect the grander salaries of the post-Alexander succession wars. Both documents give light-armed pay as half that of the infantry (*Inscriptiones Graecae*² 4.1.68, 9.1.3). Polybius records Macedonian troops receiving 1 drachma a day for, it seems, *opsonion* and *sitos* together (5.1.12), but this is not certain (Walbank, *Comm.* 1.538–9; 3.347). Roman legionaries, incidentally, seem to have been paid the equivalent of 180 drachmas a year in the 3rd and 2nd Centuries, half our mercenaries' rate, and centurions 360 (Pol. 6.39.12; G.R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier* (London, 1969), 89–90; J.B. Campbell, *OCD*³ 1444).

⁵ The detailed estimates for pay are: 800 mercenary cavalry and 1,200 Libyan at 1.5 drachmas a man, 7,700 mercenary infantry at 8 obols and 11,300 Libyan at 6 obols, earning 1,600 + 2,400 + 10,267 + 11,300 = 25,567 drachmas a day (at 6 obols = 1 drachma). One talent was worth 6,000 drachmas. For officers' pay see Launey's table (2.757). *Sitarchia* in the 3rd Century approximately 3 to 3.3 obols: Launey, 758–9.

When ration-money, *sitarchia*, was paid it seems to have averaged 3 to 3.3 obols a day per man. If paid at an average rate of 3.3 obols a day, its daily total for the army was rather more than 11,000 drachmas; hence 330,000 drachmas, fifty-five talents, over a month. Rations or money were due for the cavalry horses too, but how much that came to cannot be guessed. Of course an army's employers might provide actual rations of corn and wine instead, if that was practicable and cheaper. The Carthaginians had their Libyan territories to supply them with both. This has been seen as their normal way of supplying Lilybaeum, Drepana and Hamilcar's field forces in the last years of the war with Rome, for the Romans gave up naval activity from mid-249 till 242. They did license privateers to prey on Punic shipping, but these cannot entirely have cut off the Punic strongholds in Sicily from Africa. Still, it may have been just as economical, and certainly less laborious, for the authorities at Carthage to pay the troops an agreed *sitarchia* and let them (or their commanders) buy the actual goods from provision-merchants sailing in to the two seaports. In either case special arrangements needed to be made for the winter months, for the seas were effectively closed and not much could be garnered from Sicily, now Roman-dominated.⁶

The debts to the troops went back quite some time, so Polybius and Diodorus imply. It was not mere difficulty of access that affected the Carthaginians' contacts with their army in Sicily. They had financial problems too, and went in for cost-cutting. They pruned the army in Africa though they probably did not completely disband it. The army of Sicily, costing over a million drachmas every month in *opsonion* and *sitarchia*—and more earlier on, when its numbers were well above the twenty thousand-plus of 241—was another obvious economy target. *Opsonion* could be held back for periods of time, as noted above, or doled out in partial instalments along with promises about paying the rest as soon as funds came to hand. *Sitarchia*, in money or in kind, was more vital—literally—in the short term, but at times the men might still be left to fend for themselves. These were all time-honoured dodges by employers. No doubt the men, their officers and their generals all knew stories about the sharp practices of past leaders like Conon and Timotheus to put off paying their troops in hard times.⁷

⁶ Privateers: Zon. 8.16. Rations in kind (*sitometria*) paid by Carthage: Gsell, 2.355–6.

⁷ Timotheus' and others' dodges: Chapter 2 n. 3; Griffith (1935) 268–71.

In 242 it got much worse. The enemy launched a new and up-to-date fleet, taking the Carthaginians by surprise. Their own relief fleet was not ready until early 241. In the months between, with the Roman fleet on blockade, the ports and Hamilcar were on their own. Then when the Punic fleet did sail with fresh supplies it was utterly defeated. It is likely that from mid-242 on payments of any kind to the army of Sicily stopped entirely.

Nor did things improve with peace, for one of the treaty-clauses required the Carthaginians to pay the Romans immediately a lump sum of one thousand talents. This need not have cleaned out the treasury but it had to be a severe depletion. Renewing the war-effort in 242–241 to confront the Romans must already have been costly. Just as the Romans had only been able to produce a new fleet thanks to a patriotic loan from private citizens, serious exertions had surely been needed at Carthage. Polybius stresses that after the Aegates disaster the Carthaginians had the will but lacked the means to fight on. He is not inventing this: the fact that they submitted to harsh territorial and financial penalties confirms it.⁸

An antithetical view holds that only limited pay was due by mid-241. Supposedly, right down to the peace treaty the Carthaginians did in fact deliver *opsonion* and *sitarchia* to Sicily more or less steadily. By this interpretation the army was owed only one to two months' further pay—in turn reckoned at between 100 and 260 talents—depending on how much time passed between peace being concluded and discussions about arrears beginning. If so, this was a fatuously small sum for the Carthaginians to want to haggle over. It would follow, too, that Polybius inflates the seriousness of their debt, whether from trusting a source keen to exaggerate their folly in 241, or through choosing to do it himself: in either case presumably to heroise Hamilcar, the man who stepped forward to save the state from the results of that folly, and damn his enemy Hanno.⁹

The Carthaginians well understood the value of money. But they can be acquitted of near-lunatic stinginess in 241. There is no evidence at all for the army in Sicily being regularly paid till early summer 241, and

⁸ Carthaginians willing but unable to fight on in 241: Pol. 1.62.1–2.

⁹ Recent theory: Loreto (1995) 48–56, arguing that no earlier unrest is heard of, and the ship taking over Hamilcar's plenipotentiary authority could have taken the latest pay-installment too, to prevent discontent (48–9). His calculations on rates of pay (49–51) do not allow for cavalrymen's and officers' higher rates, and ignore *sitarchia*.

the ancient sources affirm it had not been. True, the troops in Sicily had not starved to death or even been starved into helplessness. One way or another they had kept going and, for much if not all of the time, the cavalrymen had kept their horses going too. When the troops did get down to negotiating with their old employers, they demanded not only their unpaid *opsonion* but recompense for unpaid rations and for horses that had died. Nor did the Carthaginians deny owing for rations: in fact Polybius states that these had been owed 'for a considerable time.' What the Carthaginians objected to was the level of compensation the men wanted. We can infer that recently the troops had been paying for most or all of their rations themselves, and the cavalrymen among them for the upkeep of their horses as well.¹⁰

As already noted, this was quite normal practice in Hellenistic armies. Soldiers went for long periods without pay, and though a general took care to keep his men fed, that too could become a problem if he ran short of money. When this happened the troops must either plunder the countryside, meet their immediate costs out of their own resources (including by borrowing money), or both. All these expedients can be inferred for the army of Sicily in the war's last years.

If the men had not been paid at all since mid-242, and only intermittently—and mostly for rations—for some years before that, then by mid-241 they were owed well over a year's arrears of both *opsonion* and *sitarchia*, or *opsonion* plus the value of the rations they had had to buy for themselves. On a conservative estimate the Carthaginians owed the equivalent of two years' *opsonion* and *sitarchia*: 4,368 talents or more than twenty-six million drachmas. The Libyans might be paying double taxes and the new western lands their tribute, but this was still a vast amount for the war-stressed treasury to find. The entire annual income of the republic did not reach such a figure.¹¹

¹⁰ Compensation demanded for horses and rations: Pol. 1.68.8–9. Rations owed 'for a considerable time', ἐκ πλείονος χρόνου: ibid. Griffith (288–9) believes that the men had been paid *sitarchia* during the war 'but that it varied from time to time according to the fluctuations in commodity prices.'

¹¹ On Carthaginian state revenues, we have only Livy's report that Lepcis in the Emporia region paid 1 talent a day as tribute in 193 (34.62.3). If Livy's source more rationally meant the entire Emporia region with Lepcis as a (rather distant) collection-centre, then 360 talents a year is rather more believable. What was left of Carthage's other territories by 193 B.C., plus customs charges at Carthage, conceivably yielded three to four times as much again, for a state income in 193 of some 1,440–1,800 talents (Hoyos (2003) 27–8, 224–5). Athens at the height of power in 431 had perhaps 1,000 talents a year (R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford 1972, repr. 1987) 258–9).

In any case, once peace was made the republic's domestic needs naturally loomed larger in the eyes of magistrates, senate and Hanno the Great than what was owed to an unproductive and now largely superfluous army. Even if funds were readily available, and it is not at all certain they were, paying such sums so soon after the war-indemnity would be a staggering financial blow. Understandably then—from the Punic point of view—Hanno and the other authorities were prepared to pay some but did not wish to pay all.

Meanwhile, in the ordinary housing of a crowded and busy metropolis there would not be a lot of spare accommodation for twenty thousand-plus newcomers. Most may have had their families in lodgings but the wives and children cannot have been well off. The head of each family, after all, had been away for years, and unpaid for much of that time. Packed lodging-houses or dormitories could not take in many newcomers. The troops were very probably housed in a different place.

Appian has a famous description of the city's triple walls with their huge inbuilt barracks, stables, elephant-stalls and storehouses. It introduces his narrative of the Third Punic War, but most or all of the structures probably existed a century earlier. By then the city had twice faced imminent attack by invaders, Agathocles from Syracuse and Regulus from Rome (whereas not until the very eve of the last Punic war did the Carthaginians realise they were again in deadly peril from the Romans). The army of Sicily could be lodged in the great wall-barracks which, according to Appian, could accommodate 20,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry with their horses—not to mention pens for three hundred elephants.¹²

With nothing constructive to do and increasingly unhappy about the delay, the men grew bored and bad-tempered. 'Many offences took place both by night and in daytime', writes Polybius, because of 'the indiscipline that developed.' Shopkeepers and army-families' landlords would be obvious targets of annoyance. So would some foreigners: merchants from Italy, for instance, were soon doing postwar business at

T. Frank estimates Roman annual revenues in the early 2nd Century—a time of increasing empire and wealth—at 13–14 million *denarii*, equivalent to the same figure in drachmas, therefore 2,166–2,333 talents (*An Economic History of Rome*, vol. 1: *The Republic* (Baltimore 1933) 126–41). In 241, even after twenty-three years of war, Carthage's revenues from a larger empire should not have been much lower than in 193, but may well have been heavily committed, e.g. to repaying war-loans to citizens.

¹² Defences of Carthage in 149: App. *Lih.* 95.448–51; Gsell, 2.20–33; Lancel (1992) 434–6. Strong fortifications already in 307: Diod. 20.59.2.

Carthage as elsewhere in North Africa, and some of the troops could harbour resentments. This raises an obvious though seldom-asked question. What sort of supervision could the authorities exercise over these military guests?¹³

The answer has more importance than mere interest. We saw earlier that Hanno's army in Libya seems to have been greatly reduced. Certainly the Carthaginians by now had nothing like a home-based force of 8,000-odd troops. But they surely kept some kind of a force in being before the army of Sicily came over. The taxes levied on the subject lands had to be collected, security provided, and at least a minimum body of troops kept for emergencies—a rising somewhere in Libya, for instance, or hostile Numidian raids. True, Polybius afterwards writes as though the Carthaginians had scarcely any military forces or equipment when the great revolt erupted, and expected nothing from whatever they did have. This is for dramatic impact, as we shall see. For he then records them mustering 'the citizen cavalry' as well as arming citizens of fighting age and hiring mercenaries. Hanno's ensuing army even had a large corps of 100 elephants plus artillery and siege engines.¹⁴

These could not all have been obtained or manufactured in a few days or weeks. Hanno's citizen cavalry, much of the armed citizen infantry, and most of the equipment and elephants surely derived from his old army of Libya. Some of its troops very probably remained in service in 241 and one obvious place to quarter them, ready for eventualities in any direction, was at Carthage. Any who lacked homes in the city could be housed in the capacious wall-barracks.

This home corps would be much too small, only a few thousand strong, to overpower the troops from Sicily if these acted in unison. Luckily the newcomers did not go past the level of individual and small-group misbehaviour. The local troops could at least maintain overall order and dissuade malcontents from excessive violence. Their moral advantage would start to wane, all the same, as discipline grew laxer among the newcomers.

¹³ 'Many offences' and 'indiscipline that developed': Pol. 1.66.6 (τὴν συμβαίνουσιν ἀκρασίαν). Italian merchants: Chapter 9.

¹⁴ 'Polybius afterwards writes': Pol. 1.71.6, cf. 68.2. Citizen forces readied, 73.1–2; Hanno's elephants, artillery and siege equipment, 74.3–4 and 74.12. For Loreto (128–9), Polybius' comments at 71.6 are so incompatible with his ensuing account of Punic preparations as to reveal him carelessly combining two differing sources ('innavertito innesso disorganico di due fonti diverse')—one pro-Hanno and the other pro-Hamilcar; see below, Chapter 24.

Another question is how the troops from Sicily supported themselves in the city. Polybius does not mention them being paid. Only when they left for Sicca does he report them receiving any money even for everyday expenses. Maybe they borrowed from moneylenders, or Carthaginian friends, or their officers. Some of the Libyans might be sent funds from kinsfolk in nearby towns. Some might pawn or sell possessions, a desperate few even their children. Theft and robbery probably accounted for a number of the offences Polybius reports. Still, all these varied efforts could only be makeshifts while the men waited.

Possibly they did receive at least some allowance from the authorities while they stayed in the city. The obvious need was rations or ration-money. The importance of *sitarchia* does not need reiterating. The fact that the men were given one gold coin for necessities when leaving for Sicca does not have to mean it was the first time they got anything. Polybius reports it perhaps because the amount struck him as too small or too large in the circumstances, or because at Carthage they had received actual rations rather than ration-money; or because his sources had seen no need to mention *sitarchia* paid while the troops were in the city, but noted the gold coin when they left.

One item suggests that the newly-arrived army at Carthage was given ration-money rather than rations. Later on, when they returned in highly aggrieved mood from Sicca to Tunes, the anxious authorities sent them lavish amounts of provisions which the troops could buy at prices they themselves set. If previously they had received rations in kind, there was no obvious reason for changing that arrangement, however cheap the prices. It fits the situation much better to infer that the Carthaginians had always paid (or had contracted to pay) an agreed *sitarchia* and still paid it to the army at Tunes. There the men would make it go much further by setting prices as they wished. While they were at Carthage, we do not know whether the ration-money also fed their dependents. It seems unlikely, but in any case no source tells us what the families had been living on before their menfolk came over.¹⁵

Regular *sitarchia*, at long last, might possibly have satisfied the troops at Carthage if the Carthaginian authorities meantime were making moves to pay their wartime arrears. Plainly the authorities did not. Instead they indicated that it would take time and that not all the troops had yet arrived. In fact, there cannot have been many still to

¹⁵ Lavish supplies at prices set by the troops at Tunes: Pol. 1.68.5.

come by mid-summer. If nothing else, the Romans will have wanted Sicily cleared of Punic forces fairly briskly. The only financial excuse available, then, must have been that current funds in the treasury were too low and time was needed to gather more. This was a reasonable argument—for a while. Only after the trading season had got well under way would customs dues and other charges yield significant new sums. Again, only after the mid-year harvest could the next substantial instalment of land taxes be collected from the Libyans. It would be an obvious administrative convenience to collect the townspeople's poll tax around the same time too.¹⁶

In present circumstances, of course, the Carthaginians could not even think of lowering the harsh Libyan tax-rates though the war was over. No doubt the prospect of another such levy on their home communities only added to the waiting Libyan soldiers' particular ill-temper. But discontent was worsening among all the troops. As summer 241 matured, the magistrates and senate at Carthage, no doubt in consultation with Hanno the Great, needed to make a choice: either pay the men what they were owed or start bargaining for a reduction. They decided on the latter.

The reason was not that the republic truly could not find enough funds to pay in full. Some months later, the Carthaginians not only agreed to full payment but actually began this—not just the arrears of *opsonion* but also the men's demands about *sitarchia*. Quite likely they had to borrow funds in the city or overseas, or use reserve hoards which we know nothing about (temple treasures, for instance), or both. One way or another the necessary funds were found. The reason why the Carthaginians wanted to avoid paying in full was that they had in mind other uses for their money.

As suggested earlier, to fit out the relief fleet in 242 the republic may well have had to seek loans from citizens and others, as had the Romans. Repaying these would be a priority and, in contrast to the Romans, the state had no war-indemnity to look to. Quite the opposite: Carthage had to pay one at the same time—another priority. A third would be rebuilding the fleet or at least some of it, for on this depended the control of Carthage's remaining overseas territories, especially those in

¹⁶ Harvest: Strabo writes that in some Numidian uplands there were two, in spring and summer (17.3.1, C831). Normally there was of course only one, around June (as still in 1913: cf. Cook & Son (1913) 277).

Sardinia; not to mention the security of the North African coasts and the Punic trade entrepôts as far as the Straits of Gibraltar.¹⁷

All the same the risks of seeking to reduce their debts to the troops were obvious. Forcing cuts would do the Carthaginians themselves no good in the eyes of the mercenary world, and for any future wars they would again need mercenaries. Double-taxing the Libyan peoples and then short-changing their conscripted menfolk could engender still other problems. More immediately, attempting cuts might provoke the army into much worse disobedience and even armed demonstrations. This was perhaps the liveliest stimulus to moving it well away from the city, and this the authorities decided to do.

Sending the troops into the interior also aimed, surely, at instilling a sense of isolation and increasing their dependence on their employers' goodwill. Such pressure would be heightened if their families went with them, and on this the Carthaginians chose to insist. Polybius makes this clear, though he uses only the word 'possessions' (or 'belongings'). The Carthaginians were afraid, he reports, that some of the men might refuse to leave their wives and children behind, and others might depart only to come back to them, which would mean renewed misbehaviour in the city. So they compelled the men, quite against their wishes, 'to take their possessions along with them'. This makes sense only if the word includes families as well as goods, and in fact Polybius confirms this afterwards when he notes what a mistake the Carthaginians made by doing this. If there were rather more than twenty thousand troops—though not necessarily every man had a family—there could have been another 20–30,000 women, children and slaves with them, all needing food and drink and all wanting a quick settlement of affairs so that they could at last go home.¹⁸

¹⁷ Loreto too argues that adequate funds were available ((1995) 51–5), though holding that the Carthaginians owed only 1–2 months' pay, and only *opsonion*, and under-reckoning it at 100 talents minimum and 266 talents maximum (n. 9 above). He supposes that the Carthaginians would have borrowed from their trading emporia around the western Mediterranean, but it is hard to see why 266 talents (or 100) were not readily available at Carthage itself, one of the Mediterranean's largest and most developed metropolises. Loreto himself rightly stresses the damage that renegeing on mercenary pay would do to their own military interests (55–6) and, less plausibly, thinks the Carthaginians wanted to re-hire these very troops for further operations (57–61).

¹⁸ Pol. 1.66.7–9. Polybius has only 'baggage' (ἀποσκευαί), but the term could cover family and slaves as well (Walbank, *Comm.* 1.133; Huss (1985) 253). The context, plus later mention of the wives and children (68.3), shows that these too had to go.

The approach to the army was naturally made through their officers, none of whom Polybius is interested in naming (most or all, no doubt, disappeared in the purges later or deserted). The men as readily agreed to depart but wanted to leave their families—in Polybius' term, 'possessions'—at Carthage because they expected to return soon to collect their arrears. This is believable enough. What is puzzling is that he then describes the Carthaginians as afraid that some might refuse to leave without their families, and others might depart only to come back to rejoin them, which would mean renewed misbehaviour in the city. Why should the Carthaginians fear that some of the men would not depart without their families, if the troops were ready to go and protested against taking their 'possessions' with them?¹⁹

Polybius is compressing things a little. The army need not have been any more unanimous now than it was later when revolt was brewing. We can infer that the bulk of the men was willing to transfer to Sicca, but against taking their wives and children along; whereas contrastingly some did not wish to go if it meant fresh separation from their loved ones. In turn, Hanno and the civil magistrates could well fear that if some troops were allowed to stay while others went, the problem of disorders in the city would not be solved and the psychological impact of removal inland would be blunted. As for allowing some families to stay behind, this would certainly tempt their menfolk to start returning soon.

The Carthaginians' resentment and impatience at the increasingly rowdy soldiery in their midst are clear. Complete removal of army, dependents and possessions looked like an easy solution. Whether Hamilcar Barca supported it we are not told, and Gisco was probably still in Sicily, but at all events Polybius has no hint of dissent among Carthaginians. Policy-makers had other reasons too for the removal, as suggested above. They let the troops believe that they could come back before long to collect their dues, and left it implied that these would be fully paid: but they intended neither, as events soon showed. Sicca was to be a form of open internment, meant to bend the army's collective mind to a cheaper settlement of the issues.

¹⁹ Hanno afterwards dealt with the army through τοὺς ἡγεμόνας again (67.10); by then the ordinary troops were suspicious at any rate of the senior officers (67.13). Later still officers and men who urged compromise were murdered: below, Chapter 7.

The troops presumably felt that a small town by the Numidian frontier was no suitable place for women and children. They protested probably through their officers, since as a body the army was still fairly disciplined. But Hanno and the civil authorities refused to make concessions. Polybius afterwards notes that the Carthaginians thus deprived themselves of potential hostages for continued good behaviour. But this became obvious only after their employees rebelled. By contrast, insisting on the removal of both families and baggage shows how the republic still took it for granted that the issues would be settled after some bargaining. It shows too that the psychological upper hand was still with the authorities. When vigorous protests failed to move them, the army complied.

Plainly the troops felt they had no choice. Dissatisfied forces did sometimes desert to a rival employer but in Africa there was none readily available. Without ships, the only alternative employer the army could look to was the king of Egypt, and he was two and a half thousand kilometres away across mostly desert, with a well-established standing army of his own already.²⁰

It is not clear just what the army's possessions (*aposkeuai*) consisted of besides families and probably some slaves. But in reporting the men's wish to leave their possessions behind, he adds that they had done this previously. That must rule out any artillery which the army of Sicily might have brought over. A contrary view includes artillery because on rebelling the troops laid siege to Utica and Hippacra, and arguably then had siege equipment. This, though, does not follow. Utica and Hippacra were under blockade, faced by rebel entrenchments rather than active attacks, and we shall see that the first mention of them having artillery and other military engines comes when they captured Hanno's. Far more likely, then, their baggage at Carthage, people apart, consisted of personal possessions. Over the years no doubt some families, even if not all, had built up quite a lot of these. Transporting everything and everyone across country to Sicca could not be anything but than laborious, even if the Carthaginians helped with waggons and pack-animals. It is no surprise that the men were deeply unenthusiastic at being made to take it all.

²⁰ Comments on potential hostages: 1.68.3. Army of the Ptolemies: Griffith (1935) 108–41, 277–82, 306–7; Launey (1950), see Index s.v. 'Ptolémées (ou Lagides)'; Sekunda (1995), especially vol. 2.

Sicca was relatively far from Carthage, 180 kilometres south-west, but the region of the river Mellègue is fertile wheat-growing country. How did the Punic authorities manage to persuade the troops to go there? On any estimate of time, it was now after the harvest. The men expected they would soon be returning to Carthage to be paid off, while on reaching Sicca they found they could live comfortably. The ration-money they were receiving at Carthage probably did not cover their families as well, who had to cope using whatever means they had done before. By contrast, in a fertile region soon after the harvest, food would be cheaper and the men's own resources would go further. It would make sense for the authorities to point this out, while assuring the men they could soon return for their pay.²¹

The troops on departing were paid a gold coin each, as noted above, 'for necessities'. The gold coin was probably equivalent to the Greek stater and worth two drachmas or, on another reckoning, a little over three. This would be about four days' worth of average *sitarchia*: scarcely a large payment but enough for some provisions on the march. Sicca was a good deal more than four days' journey away and the authorities were keen for the troops to go, so the payment is best seen as a supplement or bonus on top of the men's ordinary *sitarchia* which Polybius, like his sources, took for granted.²²

In the end they set forth, perhaps in divisions a few days apart and by differing roads to make travel and provisioning easier. At a relatively relaxed rate of about 15 kilometres a day (they had their families with them), the journey would take two weeks at most. Arrival at Sicca will have been around mid-August, 241.²³

²¹ 'Troops' comfortable life at Sicca, Pol. 1.66.10–11; early return to Carthage expected, 66.7. Walter (1947) 231 bizarrely describes Sicca as 'en plein désert'.

²² Gold coin (χρυσούν) paid 'for necessities' (εἰς τὰ κατεπείγοντα), 66.6. Equivalent to the Greek stater and worth two drachmas: Walbank, *Comm.* 1.133. Worth 20 obols (= 3 dr. 2 ob.): Launey, 2.759. A gold coin from a hoard found at Tunis in 1952 has been seen as part of a special issue struck for this purpose: Carradice and La Nièce (1988) 49.

²³ 'Baggage' been left at Carthage before (καθάπερ καὶ τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ὑπῆρχον): Pol. 1.66.7. Baggage included artillery: Loreto, 61, 125. Hanno's artillery, Pol. 1.74.4; captured by the rebels, 74.12. Army perhaps travelled in successive divisions: so too Loreto, 61. Marching speeds: see especially Proctor (1971) 26–34, showing that to average 20 km. a day, including one day in five as a rest-day, was normal for Roman imperial armies on campaign. Hannibal's speed of 800 *stadia* (154 km. or 93 miles) over 10 days, during one part of his march through southern Gaul in 218 (Pol. 3.50.1), cannot have been his norm as often supposed. It was a fairly leisurely pace; for a possible explanation of his strategy see Hoyos (2003) 102–5, 112. On the chronology cf. Hoyos (2000) 371, 379.

CHAPTER FIVE

SICCA

Hanno's and his confrères' calculations soon misfired. To be sure, they now had the army of Sicily out of their and their fellow-citizens' hair. But next they had to convince it to accept less than full dues. This was plainly not going to be easy. Hanno, it seems, dithered before facing up to it.

His excuse may have been that not all the soldiers had yet assembled at Sicca. Some did come in later, and Polybius implies a significant spell of inactivity before Hanno arrived. Some of the men spent their time calculating what they were owed, predictably enough reaching totals which Polybius terms 'many times above the proper ones'. This may or may not be fair, but no doubt an unsympathetic observer, or later writer, would judge them so. On the other hand, one sceptical modern view treats these exorbitant calculations as just a Polybian assumption. Supposedly, his source was pro-Carthaginian and had no way of finding out what really happened; Polybius' obviously critical attitude to the army did the rest.

It is not a persuasive view, especially the idea that what happened among the troops must always have remained unknown to the Carthaginians. For over the next few years some rebels deserted to the Carthaginians and others were captured, while still others must have survived. Many would be available for questioning sooner or later. Even a rebel memoir or two is not unthinkable.¹

At Sicca the troops continued to muster in their national divisions, and maintained discipline under their officers. But signs of more radical

¹ Some troops at Sicca calculated totals 'many times above the proper ones' (τινὲς μὲν αὐτῶν...συγκεφαλαιούμενοι πολλαπλάσια τῶν καθηκόντων): Pol. 1.66.11, cf. next note. The report dismissed as 'una supposizione' because 'non si vede da dove la sua fonte potesse attingere informazioni in materia': Loreto (1995) 61; yet he correctly infers elsewhere that information could be got from prisoners during or after the war (119–20). That some soldiers reached Sicca well after the rest is inferred because, after describing and commenting on affairs there, Polybius then reports Hanno going out 'as soon as everyone had been gathered together at Sicca' (1.67.1). Significant period of inactivity before Hanno's arrival: cf. Loreto, *ibid.*, 'per almeno alcuni giorni'.

feeling and organisation were emerging. It was ‘some’ of the men, Polybius writes, who were reckoning up their dues. Having worked out the supposedly exorbitant totals, the same men ‘declared that they [the entire army] should claim these from the Carthaginians.’ He then adds, not that the army decided to do this, but that ‘all the men had high hopes and a high expectation that the improvement in their favour would occur.’ In other words the minority’s ambitious calculations, though not adopted by the whole army, nonetheless reflected the general confidence that their claims would be satisfactorily settled once Hanno arrived. The blandishments worked on them at Carthage had been eminently successful.²

Other legitimate inferences can be made. For the first time we find a more truculent element among the troops, intent on pushing the Carthaginians hard over the arrears. This element was not yet mutinous, given Polybius’ emphasis on all the men being confident of their claims being met. But more than ever the army had grown aware of the strength of its position. The march through the fertile and populous countryside, from the coastlands through the Bagradas and Muthul valleys, would have reminded them of the wealth the Carthaginians commanded. It would have shown, too, how relatively undefended the land was, how resentful the Libyan population, and therefore how open to pressure their employers. Impressions like these, sharpened by the further waiting-period at Sicca, would not make them more inclined to agree to a discount as a favour to the Carthaginians. Their impatience was clearly growing. As it grew, it gave more impact to the voices among them demanding firmness and even brazenness in the coming talks.

These voices were probably still in a minority. But that more assertive feelings existed alongside milder ones is not surprising in a large army or even within each of its divisions. Both attitudes are found later, even when the forceful side had gained the upper hand. Very likely it was at

² Pol. 1.66.11: the troops reckoning up high totals of arrears ‘declared that they should claim these from the Carthaginians’ (ταῦτ’ ἔφρασαν δεῖν ἀπαιτεῖν τοὺς Καρχηδονίους). Α τινὲς μὲν statement ending here is followed by a πάντες δ’ statement referring to ‘all’ the troops, which confirms the earlier stress on ‘some’. ‘High expectation that the improvement in their favour would occur’: μεγάλην προσδοκίαν τῆς ἐσομένης περὶ αὐτοὺς ἐπανορθώσεως (66.12); ἐπανόρθωσις means a setting to rights, amendment, correction or improvement (see LSJ, 609 s.v., and cf. Pol. 1.11.2, 5.88.3). Walbank, 1.133, deals with the future participle ἐσομένης by translating its phrase as ‘the gain that was due to them’; Pédech (1969) 108, much more freely, ‘qu’ils s’enrichiraient bientôt’.

this stage that the men who afterwards headed the great revolt made themselves noticeable—the Libyan Mathos, his Campanian comrade Spendius, and Autaritus the Gaul. Polybius introduces them only later on in his narrative, but their uncompromising fierceness then towards their old employers suggests that even at Sicca they were among the most outspoken. Early on, their views about what demands to put and how to press them were too extreme for most of their comrades. If they were cohesive and noisy enough, though, the more they would be noticed, and over time the more influential they could become.³

For the more assertive troops to urge their views on the rest, group discussions in some form can be inferred. This again would not be surprising. The various ethnic divisions exercised and drilled as units, and each pretty certainly had its own quarters or campground. Daily discussions within each division can be taken for granted, and Polybius attests them at a later stage. Even if language-barriers (which he soon highlights) prevented most soldiers in different divisions from regularly mingling and sharing ideas, quite a number of their officers, and some of the rank and file too, knew one or more languages, including Punic as a *lingua franca*. This would be particularly true of the Libyan division, recruited from the Carthaginians' own North African subjects. Officers acted as intermediaries a while later during the talks with Hanno. Some already favoured a hard line towards the Carthaginians.⁴

Once the last of the expected troops finally reached Sicca, the general of Libya followed. Hanno no doubt had an escort with him, but he is not likely to have brought large funds, if any at all. His aim was to bargain the arrears down, but he could not forecast how far he might succeed and therefore how much money would finally have to be paid. Besides, the men expected to return to Carthage to be paid off and it was surely safer to leave huge amounts of cash there.⁵

³ Aggressive versus milder attitudes later on: Pol. 1.69.9–11. Mathos already noticeable at Sicca: n. 16 below; so too Loreto, 106.

⁴ Group discussions: Loreto, 62–64, 76–77, infers that an alternative leadership was already developing in the army. Punic as *lingua franca*: cf. Pol. 1.80.6–7, and below, n. 10. That it was Greek is a good deal less plausible (*contra* Ameling (2000) 112). Officers as intermediaries between troops and Hanno: Pol. 1.67.10 and 13. Some officers ill-disposed towards the Carthaginians: 67.11.

⁵ Hanno arrived with or just after the latecomers: n. 1 above. Loreto (1995) 63 supposes that he did bring funds with him. These, by his unconvincing reckonings (48–55), would amount to under three hundred talents. Since the real arrears totalled as much as 4,320 talents, even with a discount from the troops Hanno could not hope to bargain them down below three thousand or so. It made little sense to carry that

What happened next is noteworthy. First Polybius has Hanno make a broad announcement that, in effect, the republic was too poor to pay in full and hoped the men would agree to some reduction. The soldiers' reaction was a succession of excited and turbulent meetings, 'sometimes by races, sometimes by all the men together,' everyone trying to communicate in his own language. This affords the Greek historian the opportunity to comment on the advantages and drawbacks of an army with many mutually incomprehensible tongues. Next—and in spite of his normal disdain for the general of Libya—he takes pains to describe Hanno's problems in communicating with the troops. Hanno could not address them directly: 'for how could that be done? It was impossible for the general to know the language of every group.' Nor could he effectively use interpreters 'as he would be speaking of the same matter four or five times.'⁶

This description of Hanno's travails may prompt immediate suspicion. Since every Carthaginian army was a mixture of races and languages, why should he have found his situation unusual? Then again, why does Polybius mention a communications problem not when he reports the general putting his basic case to the army, but only after describing the excited confusion that arose among the troops? Does this expose a contradiction due to Polybius clumsily stitching together conflicting sources (as several moderns have suggested), or a slip which shows him falsely dramatising events so as to set the troops, or Hanno himself, in a bad light? For he later remarks that Autaritus the Gaul was a particularly effective speaker, because he did know Punic and this was 'the language with which the largest number of men, due to the length of the previous war, were happy.' If many of the troops could understand Autaritus, why not Hanno?⁷

much money around the countryside. Veith (1912) 527 supposes him arriving 'mit leeren Händen' but does not discuss it.

⁶ Hanno's announcement and the army's reaction: 1.67.1–2. Language complexities and Hanno's difficulties: 1.67.3–11.

⁷ Seeming contradictions: Veith, 528; Walter (1947) 236; Loreto (1995) 9, 12–13. Loreto, 62–65, rejects Polybius' version of Hanno's dealings at Sic: see n. 15. 'The language with which the largest number of men... were happy': Pol. 1.80.6 (my translation). The verb *συνεσάινοντο* is unique in Polybius if not in Greek: cf. LSJ, 1734, s.v. *συσσαίνωμαι*; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.145; Foucault (1972) 382; C.-F. Collatz, M. Gützlaß, H. Helms, *Polybios-Lexicon* 3, Lieferung 1 (Berlin, 2002) 431, s.v. *συσσαίνω*. But the glosses 'feel flattered', 'être flatté' hardly suit; better is 'angesprochen fühlen'. The basic verb, *σαίνειν*, can mean 'gladden'; a similar sense fits Polybius' compound passive form. 'The largest number of men': οἱ πλεῖστοι can also more sweepingly mean

But clumsy self-contradiction is not the inevitable explanation or even the likeliest. For one thing, if Hanno really was understood directly by the bulk of the army, Polybius would not have damaged his narrative by saying so. The turbulence that resulted, the troops' angry suspicion at the Carthaginians' dealings with them, the breakdown of trust in their own officers and their determination to force their employers to pay, all would still have happened. Second, he does not really imply that Hanno's opening statement to the troops was intelligible to the men whereas his later ones were not. He does follow that opening statement with his own comments on the many languages in Carthaginian armies, particularly this one, and then writes that, because of the languages problem, the men had to be consulted through their officers: 'which Hanno at that time was continuously seeking to do.' This does not contradict his initial report but amplifies it. Some soldiers (like Autaritus) did know some Punic, but to inform the whole army Hanno communicated through the officers who knew his language.⁸

It is true that more of the troops may have understood Punic than Polybius suggests. To highlight Hanno's problems he probably exaggerates how few did. This does not justify inferring that in reality they were the majority, or even a big minority. As for Autaritus' comprehensibility, at worst Polybius is indulging in some evocative writing. His remark about Punic being the tongue 'with which the largest number of men were happy' is a piece of stylistic phrasing—his Greek verb has a unique form and 'the largest number' plainly has a relative sense. To underline Autaritus' rhetoric he stresses how many understood Punic, just as earlier on he stresses how few in order to underline Hanno's difficulties. That he is writing for impact in Autaritus' case, not exactitude, is clear again when he goes on first to describe Autaritus being applauded 'unanimously', then to report 'many' soldiers stepping forward to oppose him.⁹

No doubt some in the mercenary units, especially officers, understood Punic, and some did Greek. This is even likelier to be true of some Libyan rank-and-filers too, not just their officers. Many soldiers would

'most of the men', but here that would contradict not just everything in Polybius' earlier account but equally his just-preceding comment (80.5) that πολλούς, 'many' (not 'most'), understood Autaritus.

⁸ 'Which Hanno at that time was continuously seeking to do' (ὅπερ ἐπειρᾶτο τότε συνεχῶς ποιεῖν ὁ Ἄννων), 67.10.

⁹ 'Unanimously', ὁμοθυμαδόν: 80.6.

have at least a basic Punic military vocabulary: terms of command, words for equipment, necessities and everyday dealings with other divisions and with Carthaginian officials. Not all polyglot armies have had even that much vocabulary in common. The nineteenth-century army of the Habsburg empire, conscripted from all over central and eastern Europe and led by German-speaking officers, often had to relay commands entirely through miming and sign-language—a serious drawback amid the smoke and uproar of battle.¹⁰

Autaritus' later hectorings to distrust and reject any Carthaginian approaches and to slaughter all who supported them as well as all the rebels' captives, were easier to understand—not necessarily in exact detail—than Hanno's proposals now. Hanno's topic was not military or charismatic but financial. It was also sensitive and needed to be accurately understood, especially if he was seeking to specify just how much of a reduction the republic was hoping for. Even rank-and-filers able to manage basic Punic could be out of their depth here. It was logical for him to inform the officers in the army and have them to convey the details to their men.

Unsurprisingly, his message did not get through accurately to all. Polybius writes of some of the officers (*hegemones*) misunderstanding it and so in turn confusing their soldiers; others pretending to Hanno that they agreed with it, but then misrepresenting it to their men. Officers need not have been very enthusiastic, even if many of them were persuaded by his arguments. Reduced arrears would put them too out of pocket, both in their own entitlements and, if they had lent money to some of their men, in what these could repay. They would not all be willing to make the sacrifice—least of all lower-ranking officers, whose financial and social positions were not much higher than those of the rank-and-file soldiers. Some thus had an incentive to influence their men against the Carthaginian proposals.¹¹

¹⁰ Habsburg army's language problems: 'Although there were nine different "languages of instruction" for peace-time use in the polyglot Austrian army [in the 19th Century]—languages like Czech, Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, Rumanian, and Italian—in battle the army employed just one: German.... One Austrian officer later noted that at Solferino his company of Slavs had been unable to comprehend even the command "Halt"' (G. Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge, UK, 1996) 11–12; cf. 32). At Podol, on 26 June 1866, 'the regiments fought bravely until nightfall, when the officers could no longer pantomime examples [of what was needed]' (square brackets in original); Wawro, 134. Another example of miscommunication next day at the battle of Wysokov: *ibid.*, 142.

¹¹ Distortion through ignorance or malice: Pol. 1.67.11.

Hanno must have expected some resistance at all levels, but not as rude a shock as the army dealt him. When they learned what he wanted—even the accurate version—uproar followed. ‘Continual gatherings took place, sometimes by races, sometimes by all the men together.’ To judge from a later mention of such meetings at Tunes, they were held after the midday meal and some of the rowdiness was due (in the historian’s disdainful view) to the amount of wine drunk. In gatherings of the full army, they presumably relied on officers and men who spoke more than one language. These full gatherings soon took on a quasi-formal character.

Polybius takes pains to stress the agitation in the camp. Because of the language differences, it ‘was full of confusion and uproar and what is known as *tyrbe*’—basically yet another word for confusion and uproar. He then goes on to say harsh things about disaffected mercenaries’ readiness to descend into mad and bestial behaviour. Such comments stem from personal distaste for the army and what it later did. His own narrative shows that bestial behaviour was still a long way off. By contrast, the vivid description of the *tyrbe* in the camp (to him the first signal of the evils to come) he must owe to one or more of his sources.

Added to the men’s grievances was a sense of affront. None of their commanders from the years in Sicily—the ones who had made them the lavish promises that Hanno was now trying to trim—had come out to face them. Gisco was no doubt genuinely unavailable, for if the last of the units from Sicily had only just now reached Sicca, then he himself had only just wound up matters at Lilybaeum and would now be en route to Carthage. But Hamilcar Barca was keeping himself scarce; and earlier generals, who at critical moments had very likely made promises too, were no more in evidence. Rightly or wrongly the troops saw the sending of Hanno in their place as a deliberate piece of bad faith. They rejected the idea of giving their employers a discount on what was owed, and when Hanno persisted they broke off talks altogether.¹²

This reaction renders it implausible that what he really offered was renewed employment, this time for campaigns in Numidia. Such a hypothesis bases itself on various items—Sicca as an outpost looking

¹² Uproar: Pol. 1.67.3 (Paton’s Loeb translation, slightly adapted). ‘Continual gatherings’: 67.2. Meetings after drunken midday meals: 69.10; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.135. Polybius’ comments on disaffected mercenaries: 67.5–6. Bitterness over non-appearance of generals from Sicily: 67.12. Talks broken off: 67.13.

westwards, the reckoning that the army's arrears amounted to no more than one or two months' pay, and the facts that it was Hanno the conqueror of Theveste who came to negotiate and that, when Polybius records the men afterwards reopening talks at Tunes, he makes no further mention of them recalling their commanders' promises in Sicily. If so the confrontation was not due to the republic's stinginess over arrears, but because it wished to re-employ the troops to conquer further African territory, whereas they wished to be discharged.¹³

Polybius says nothing about Hanno proposing this. Therefore, if this reconstruction is correct, we have to infer that Polybius was misled by one or more sources into giving a completely different version of events—misled indeed by most of them, for otherwise he could easily have noted the discrepancy. Or alternatively he himself chose to replace truth with fiction. In either case a further inference follows: that the fiction was devised, by anti-Hanno and pro-Barcid writers, to misrepresent Hanno as so grossly incompetent that he precipitated a war in which only the genius of Hamilcar could save Carthage.

But the evidence gives no support to this thesis. The arrears, as we saw earlier, amounted to several thousand talents, not a few hundred. Again, if Hanno aimed at re-enlisting the army for fresh warfare and, by the same thesis, brought to Sicca the fairly small sums needed to pay off the arrears, it is impossible to understand why the men did not at any rate take their money—whether they wished to re-enlist or not. To account for that objection, the theory must suppose that Hanno kept quiet about the funds until the men should agree to re-enlist; or else (quite improperly) made payment conditional on their agreeing. But this creates fresh difficulty. Why should Polybius' sources, or Polybius himself, choose to invent a different scenario if Hanno's genuine behaviour put him in an unflattering light anyway?¹⁴

¹³ Hanno and Carthaginians wanted to re-employ the troops in Africa: de Sanctis, 3.1.372; Loreto, 57–61, who sees Polybius' version of events at Sicca as 'un autoschediasma' (an invention or improvisation), 62–65. Loreto suggests (64) that he omits the re-employment offer because the 'carattere selettivo, sintetico e ideologicamente condizionato della sua lettura' of events made him judge it 'inconferente'; this is unconvincing.

¹⁴ Another drawback to Loreto's reconstruction is his view that the Carthaginians both planned to use the army of Sicily for Numidian expansion and intended at the same time to renew the war with Rome (83–85, 128–29, 199, 203). Even supposing both aims were financially practicable together, it would have been folly to send the veterans into Africa while presumably using new levies and enlistments to confront the Romans: cf. Hoyos (1995).

We should accept Polybius' account of what went on. Proceedings did not get past Hanno's overtures for reducing the money owed and the army's rejection of them. The meetings provoked by these overtures—meetings of the separate ethnic contingents and then of the whole army—show a further stage of self-assertion among the soldiery, fuelled by anger and a sense of betrayal. There was still no move towards mutiny, though malcontents like Mathos no doubt pushed for it, or for actions close to it (like an armed demonstration outside Carthage). But the troops now washed their hands of dealing with the general of Libya. Hanno withdrew discomfited. Since he was the ranking military authority in Punic Africa, this was a major challenge to the Carthaginians.

How long the failed talks lasted can be estimated roughly. The army reached Sicca around mid-August, the last contingents came in some while later, and Hanno after these. Obviously several days passed while he was there, given his repeated efforts to persuade the men through their officers and the men's series of angry meetings. But since Hanno's case was basically clear—even if it suffered distortion—and the men increasingly affronted and excited, half a month looks like a reasonable estimate. The total breakdown of the talks may then be dated to mid- or late September.

The later rebel chief Mathos was by now fairly prominent among the malcontents. Polybius afterwards attests this: Mathos 'had been a prominent agitator in the previously mentioned disturbances' at Sicca. Where Mathos went we may be sure his confrères and confidants, the Campanian Spendius and Autaritus the Gaul closely followed. They cannot yet have been setting the pace of action, for they appear in Polybius' narrative only later on. But from what he then tells us about them, at Sicca they had to be among those least keen on a negotiated settlement. Their rôle at this stage would be still mostly negative, arguing down—or just shouting down—compromise-suggestions and urging their fellows to take what they were due by force. This would make them noticed by all and popular with some, though their views were not yet those of the army as a whole.

As well as snubbing Hanno, the troops had now become 'thoroughly mistrustful of their divisional officers'. Polybius' phrase for these latter in Greek, *kata meros hegemones*, marks off a particular group among the officers, for normally he terms officers just *hegemones*. *Meros* in military contexts usually means an army division or contingent, occasionally part

of one. He must be thinking of the commanders of the half a dozen or so ethnic contingents. Their immediate subordinates likely enough shared their attitudes, attitudes which now to the rank and file were entirely too accommodating towards the Carthaginians. Such officers lost the men's confidence. By contrast none of the later rebel leaders seems to have held a high rank originally, though Mathos and Autaritus, at any rate, were probably officers at lower levels.¹⁵

With the senior commanders powerless, the groundswell favouring a move back to Tunes to put extra pressure on the Carthaginians therefore came from other leaders—temporary ones as it turned out. These would be officers who sympathised with the rank and file's grievances, together with rank-and-filers who had their comrades' respect. No doubt the extremists like Mathos, Spendius and their friends agreed too. What happened to the unpopular divisional commanders and their immediate subordinates is not stated. Some may have left Sicca with Hanno, while others stayed behind to try to play a moderating rôle still. Most lower-ranking officers probably stayed too. They had fewer resources of their own than senior ones did, and many sympathised with the troops' actions. But even these officers' authority, outside strictly military matters, would be limited after these events. The army was starting to treat itself as a self-consciously autonomous entity. The majority had lost regard for any arguments the Carthaginians might put. Now the troops decided to march back to Tunes, on the coast close to Carthage, to face down their employers.

Mathos, his friends, and other radical malcontents may well have begun thinking still more extreme thoughts. On the march to Sicca, during the stay there, and still more on the march back, the army would have become aware of the Libyan population's grievances and anger against their rulers. Mathos and his Libyan comrades in particular must have been fully informed. After all Sicca was less than two hundred and fifty kilometres from virtually any part of Punic-ruled territory. Messages

¹⁵ 'Divisional commanders' is Paton's Loeb translation of τοῖς κατὰ μέρος ἡγεμόσιν (67.13); so too Pédech (1969) 'les chefs d'unités'. Μέρος as army division or contingent: note Gisco sending the troops over to Africa κατὰ μέρη (66.2) and the Libyans being τὸ μέγιστον μέρος of the army (67.7). But the word can also refer to part of a division, as when Polybius mentions (77.5) that only some of the original Gallic contingent—here termed a σύστημα—were present because 'the remaining part', τὸ λοιπὸν μέρος, had deserted to the Romans at Eryx (cf. Chapter 2 n. 4). 'A prominent agitator (πλείστα μὲν κεκνηκώς) in the previously mentioned disturbances': Pol. 1.69.6.

could move freely between the men and their home communities, for the Carthaginians had no way and probably no idea of stopping them. To most of the army, Libyan discontent could be another and very powerful lever for putting pressure on their old employers. To the extremists it began to prompt other, far more venturesome ambitions.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TALKS AT TUNES

Tunes was then a small town about eighteen kilometres south-west of Carthage, on the western shore of the lagoon now called the Lake of Tunis. On its other, inland side lay another lake, now the salt marsh Sebkhet Sijoumi. One and a half kilometres north of the town rose high ground, today's Parc du Belvedere—the start of a narrow range of hills, the Jebel Naheli, running north for thirteen kilometres almost to the coast west of Carthage's peninsula. Just over these hills, the chief river of Punic North Africa, the Bagradas, flowed in a swift and narrow channel to the Mediterranean.

The Belvedere heights were a logical place for the army to camp on and around, no doubt in a well-spread-out encampment which on its south-eastern side reached the lake shore. After all the camp had to accommodate not just more than twenty thousand troops but their families as well, who must have come too. The alternative, leaving them at Sicca, would have been risky as well as unpalatable. The town of Tunes itself, as is clear from developments later on, came under the army's control.¹

As shown above, the talks at Sicca had failed by late September or thereabouts. This dates to early autumn the army's return to the coast. The march back would take about two weeks, if all the men and their civilian followers moved together. It would make sense, though, for some of the troops to press ahead and seize the area before the Carthaginians could react in any way. The rest, escorting the civilians, could follow at a slower pace. Early in October, 241, the whole army and its camp-followers should have been encamped around Tunes.

¹ Tunes 120 stadia from Carthage: Pol. 1.30.15, 67.13; 14.10.5. The most detailed map of the region during the revolt is Veith's Map 12, though his identification of many sites is debatable. He implausibly locates the camp entirely on the Belvedere heights on a site just 1.5 by 0.8 km. in size, and making no allowance for the families (cf. Veith, 530). Loreto too (70, 85–6) thinks that the army was barred from the town and (125–6) seized it later, but Appian's very brief mention of the mutiny at *Sic.* 2.9 hardly shows this. (And if it did, it would also mean that Utica was seized at the same time by the rebels, for Appian writes this too; in reality Utica defected to them years later.)

Since the aim was to put close pressure on the city of Carthage, it would not surprise if vantage-points further along the Jebel Naheli were now taken over too, especially a saddle 12 kilometres north of Tunes, just north-west of today's El Ariana, where the road from Carthage to Utica crossed the hills to go down to a bridge over the Bagradas. Jebel Naheli was certainly guarded some time later. Pickets very likely watched the shore road from Tunes towards Carthage too, for the army had no reason to trust Hanno's goodwill and Hanno had troops. When later on Gisco travelled to Tunes with funds he went by water, which looks like a security measure. The veterans thus effectively barred Carthage from land access to the rest of North Africa, except on their terms.

The Carthaginians reacted as desired. In effect, they capitulated. 'They continually sent out envoys from the senate' to Tunes, writes Polybius, 'promising to do all that they demanded of them if it was possible.' The first thing the troops wanted was, unsurprisingly, regular and cheap provisions. No sooner said than done: plentiful quantities began to come over from the city. Unusually, but not unprecedentedly as we shall see, the troops were allowed to set the prices they were prepared to pay. This must mean that the magistrates at Carthage paid market cost for the provisions and the cost of sending them over to Tunes, to be sold at prices decided by the buyers. In practice the Carthaginians subsidised the merchants and tradesmen who purveyed the actual goods. Not only Carthaginian merchants took part in the provision-markets; so did Italian traders, and no doubt others from Sicily and elsewhere.²

If as yet the army had not been paid its arrears, how did the men buy their provisions, whatever the price? Polybius takes for granted that they could. The plainest answer must be that the Carthaginians continued to pay them their contractual ration-money, *sitarchia*, as before. This inference is backed up by his report of the Carthaginians then

² 'They continually sent out envoys' etc.: Pol. 1.68.5 (ἀεί...ἐξαπέστελλον). Provisions sold at prices decided by the army, *ibid.* Italian traders: below, Chapter 9. Diodorus' claim (25.2.1) that the Carthaginians cheated the mercenaries of their dues, and so brought the war on themselves, is farcical; and later he accuses the mercenaries in turn of exaggerated compensation claims (25.6, ὑπερβαλλούσας). For Loreto (1995) 16–21, the first passage points to Diodorus using not Polybius, but an earlier source—one both 'anticartaginense' and 'filobarcide', apparently (20)—while the second is the work of an incompetent excerptor. It is much more likely that Diodorus himself has not very carefully compressed Polybius' account, perhaps doing it from memory; cf. Chapter 24 nn. 4–5.

agreeing to pay the arrears of *opsonion*. With the men able to set their own prices, their ration-money would go much further—and it had to, since their families were with them. Even so it need not have gone as far as every man wanted or needed. Some might still have to borrow funds, adding to whatever debts they had already built up.

Something else can be inferred. Were each individual soldier to pay what he pleased, it would be a recipe for chaos. In fact, there would be no reason why he should pay at all rather than just help himself. Orderly arrangements were required, even if the prices were amended from time to time. The regular meetings of contingents and of the whole army no doubt continued, now under the relatively moderate officer-leadership that had taken charge at Sicca. Price levels were no doubt decided at these meetings. Meanwhile, however bitter the men felt about the Carthaginians' past treatment of them, they were still looking for a settlement of the issues.

Polybius does not mention who the senators in the Punic embassies were. Hanno plainly was not one, and neither therefore any of his closest associates or officers. The Carthaginians could not risk another breakdown in relations. All the same the delegates surely included some of his friends and supporters, for Hanno was still general of Libya and the leading man at Carthage. Nor does Polybius record how many times the delegates came and went. We do not, of course, have to suppose a daily shuttle between Carthage and Tunes. But at least three can be inferred.

The troops at Tunes were yet to put forward the details of their claims. They had not got as far as that with Hanno, which meant that everything had to be set out now. Polybius, unfriendly as usual, asserts that 'there was much that was thought up every day by the mercenaries, who had gained in confidence and had observed the Carthaginians' alarm and terror.' He specifies three demands by the men. First they claimed, and were conceded, all their *opsonion*. Then they demanded reimbursement for 'the horses that had died', a pointer to the status and influence of the cavalymen in the army. This stipulation too the Carthaginians, it seems, accepted without argument. The third was a more complicated one about ration-money, which caused trouble as we shall see. This sequence implies at least three separate stages in the talks, and so a minimum of three trips to Tunes by the envoys.³

³ 'There was much that was thought up' etc., Pol. 1.68.6 (ἦν δὲ πολὺ τὸ καθ' ἐκάστην

It was a laborious way of coming to an agreement. But each item had its complexities. Polybius writes simply of *opsonion*, but we have seen that there were different pay-levels for different types of soldier. Nor, obviously, had all the troops been in service for the same length of time. Some men too might have transferred from one classification to another: cavalrymen moving to the infantry, for instance, if their horses died and could not be replaced. As for the horses, some may have been state property while others belonged to their riders; and other factors too may have applied, as we shall see. Such details would have been worked out by the troops while waiting at Sicca, but needed to be set out now for the envoys. The Carthaginians were resigned to paying the claims, but they would hardly accept a single global figure for each one without some sort of details.

The envoys were probably not too fussy about whether the detailed tallies were entirely truthful. No doubt there were records at Carthage of who had enlisted, when, and at what rate of pay, and these could be compared with the soldiers' lists. But it was clearly risky to push the troops too far on details, so if the men's lists clashed with those in the city the magistrates there probably did not make too big a fuss. It could well seem best to take separately each set of claims from Tunes to Carthage for the senate, magistrates and Hanno to vet. The troops would prefer this procedure too. It was slower, but surer than confronting their old employers with all their costly demands at once and thus risking more prevarication or, worse, a flat refusal.

The demands that aggrieved troops could make are illustrated by an agreement from a different part of the world a decade or two before. Eumenes, ruler of the kingdom of Pergamum in Asia Minor, had faced a mutiny by several bodies of mercenaries. An inscription records their reconciliation and his concessions. The men would have corn and wine at substantially reduced prices, a set ten-month campaigning season, back pay for inactive or retired soldiers, the right for soldiers to will their money to their orphaned children, exemption from taxes while on service and on discharge, pay for (apparently) the period of the mutiny, and bonuses for soldiers decorated for bravery. In return the officers and men swore loyalty unto death to Eumenes.⁴

ἡμέραν παρὰ τοῖς μισθοφόροις ἐπινούμενον, κτλ.). Carthaginians agreed to pay claims for *opsonion* and dead horses, 68.8–9.

⁴ Eumenes and his mercenaries: *OGIS* 266 = Schmitt (1969), 144–49, no. 481; date between 263 and 241, and maybe after 252 (E.V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon* (2nd

Both situations vividly show two employers, Eumenes and the Punic republic, being forced to concede generous terms to troops well aware of their military muscle. Naturally the two situations were not identical. The troops at Tunes were not continuing in service. Nor did the questions of taxes and wills arise, so far as we know. But the importance of cheap rations—the first item on the Pergamum list and the first to be settled at Tunes—is clear in both cases, and in both the prices were fixed as the troops prescribed. Of course the difference was that for Eumenes' mercenaries this was to be a standard feature of service, whereas the Carthaginians were supplying cheap provisions only until their employees were discharged. As for pay, no doubt the troops at Tunes too demanded it up to the present, a time when—arguably—they were technically in mutiny, having returned from Sicca without authorisation.

But how the arrears of pay were worked out we are not told. So we do not know whether the supposedly fanciful amounts calculated by some of the men at Sicca, before Hanno's arrival, formed any basis for the sums that the Carthaginians now agreed to pay. Perhaps they influenced the army's present claim, for the troops as a whole were angry enough to press for whatever could be squeezed out of the Carthaginians. But if the army had forced truly massive pay-demands on their hapless employers (for instance, triple or quintuple their normal *opsonion*) there would have been little need to go on to claim for horses and rations too. Everything could have been lumped into one inflated estimate for *opsonion*: even two years' repayment at twice the normal rate would have come to over 6,000 talents. But the rate agreed on for *opsonion* might, perhaps, have been enlarged by a range of bonuses or special rates: just as an example, for service with Hamilcar on Mt Eryx. Again, the months that the men had had to wait in Africa might be paid at a bonus rate.⁵

ed., Ithaca and London, 1971) 23 n. 52); a decade earlier according to R.E. Allen, *The Attalid Kingdom* (Oxford, 1983) 24 n. 52, 186–87. Eumenes' concessions: lines 1–15 list the men's 'demands', ἀξιώματα, which he agrees to; see Griffith (1935) 282–88; Launey (1949) 2.738–46; Hansen, 228, 231–32; Austin (1981) 320–23, no. 196. Corn and wine: for a measure of each the men pay 4 drachmas (ll. 3–4). An alternative view is that Eumenes is paying them ration-money in lieu of actual rations (Griffith, 282–83; Schmitt, 147), but as the stated prices are low for the mid-3rd Century this is less plausible (Launey, 739–41). The officers are termed, in standard fashion, ἡγεμόνες (ll. 20, 21 etc.).

⁵ For various sorts of bonus see, e.g., Griffith, 286, 292–93, 299.

The second item agreed on, the value of the horses that had died on service, reflects the influence of the cavalrymen. It has been seen as a particularly brazen demand, on the ground that the horses had been provided by the Punic state and remained state property. This may be so, but it is far from certain that to the cavalrymen things were that simple. Horses and cavalry equipment were expensive not only to buy but to maintain, and especially horses for war. With little pay coming over from Africa, and rations or ration-money intermittent, their riders would have had to spend a good deal of money on them from their own resources or by borrowing. Conceivably, one of the promises made by the generals in Sicily could have been that, as compensation, cavalrymen might keep their mounts after the war. Horses that died, on the other hand, were a total loss unless the state chose to offer recompense.

Still other points are worth noting. Some horses originally allocated must have died from wounds or hardship, and to continue as cavalrymen their riders would have needed to acquire new horses, sometimes at their own expense. Possibly enough, too, some cavalrymen had brought their own mounts with them when they enlisted. If these died it was again a total loss for them. In these conditions the demand for compensation need not have seemed unreasonable to the riders and their infantry comrades. What estimate they put on the dead horses we are not told, but Polybius records the Carthaginians accepting it.⁶

Then came a problem. 'Next, they said that they must receive the value of the rations (*silometria*) owed to them for a considerable time, at the highest price corn had stood at during the war.' Just what this involved is not clear and modern interpretations vary. But in contrast to the preceding claims, this one was opposed by the Carthaginians. Polybius does not say so explicitly but it must be inferred. After reporting this third claim as just quoted, he comments anew about the soldiers continuing to think up further claims: 'in short they were constantly devising some new and fresh item, postponing agreement until it was impossible.' This was because of the 'many ill-disposed and mutinous men among them'—no doubt he is thinking of Mathos, Spendius and their comrades. As a result the two sides had to turn to arbitration.⁷

⁶ Brazen demand: Walbank, 1.134. Griffith, 289, mistakenly claims it was refused and infers that the Carthaginians always supplied the cavalry horses; Gsell, 2.356, that they gave a cavalryman his first horse, but the only mention of this is around the year 410 when they were anxious to attract recruits (Diod. 13.44.2).

⁷ 'Next they said that they must receive' &c., 68.9, slightly adapted from Paton's

In other words, the envoys and the army could not agree on the ration-money question. But what was the argument about? In one view, during the war the supply of rations, *sitometria*, or of ration-money, *sitarchia*, had been quite regular and, as corn prices fluctuated, so had *sitarchia*. If so, the troops now were demanding that—no matter what *sitometria* or *sitarchia* the Carthaginians had provided—they should now re-reckon it using the highest price that corn had reached during the war, and pay over the balance. On another view, the troops had not always received either *sitometria* or *sitarchia* during the war, and now were demanding that what they were still owed should be paid out at the rate of the highest price reached in wartime.⁸

This is more plausible. The men wanted to be paid out, Polybius writes, for rations that were ‘owed to them’. This does not fit rations or ration-money that had actually been supplied. What the demand implies is a situation already discussed. At times when their employers supplied no rations or ration-money, the troops had had to pay for rations themselves. At Sicca they might have been willing to accept compensation at rates that took price-fluctuations into account. Now they wanted the flat high rate. It meant more money in their pockets to take home.

The Carthaginians’ unenthusiastic reaction implies that the troops had done without rations or ration-money quite often in the past several years. Maybe too the highest price for corn between 264 and 241, in Africa or Sicily, had been so much higher than the norm that paying off the claim seemed too much of a burden for Punic finances. Turning to arbitration implies that the Carthaginians had made their own calculation of what the rations-compensation should be and it was seriously at odds with the army’s (though they thought their calculation justified). They did not deny that they owed compensation; they objected to the level sought.

The troops’ demand obviously aimed at maximising (literally) the benefits of rations-compensation. Possibly, when they worked out what their first two claims would actually yield, they were disappointed and

translation of *πάλιν τῆς προσφελομένης σιτομετρίας ἐκ πλείονος χρόνου τὴν μεγίστην γεγонуῖαν ἐν τῷ πόλεμῳ τιμὴν ἔφασκον αὐτοὺς δεῖν κομίζεσθαι*. ‘In short’ &c., 68.10; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.135. Troops agreed to an arbiter *περὶ τῶν ἀμφισβητουμένων*, 68.11, cf. 68.13.

⁸ Regular rations paid, in kind or in money: Griffith, 288; accepted by Loreto (1995) 65–66. Not all rations or money paid: Launey, 2.729; Walbank, 1.134–35.

so made the third more extreme. But they had been working out what they were due, in *opsonion* anyway, for weeks (and the cavalrymen what their dead horses were worth). It is hard to believe that under the first two headings they did not wring everything they plausibly could out of the Carthaginians. The third needs a different explanation.

We have seen that each claim was probably discussed in turn. It looks as if something happened between the second and the third, and the result was to present the envoys from Carthage with a much more drastic third claim when they came over once again. The Carthaginians' keenness to conciliate and anxiety not to antagonise had become so plain, Polybius reports, as to arouse the army's contempt and reinforce its self-confidence. The 'many ill-disposed and mutinous men' in its ranks—Mathos and his friends, in other words—were winning more support in the ranks as the Carthaginians gave way on one point after another, and their clamour forced the current leadership to pitch the third claim as high as possible.⁹

Polybius has been read as reporting that still more demands were put. 'In short they were constantly devising some new and fresh item', prompted by the ill-disposed and mutinous element; and then they agreed to let one of their old generals decide 'on the disputed points'. Yet he does not specify details of any extra claims. Soon afterwards settlement was finally if delusively reached on the basis of the three claims already discussed: pay, horses and rations. The revolt then broke out for other reasons—not because supposed extra demands were rejected or ignored. So Polybius is sometimes accused of inventing the supposed further demands for hostile rhetorical effect, or choosing to follow a source which had invented them.

Such an accusation does not at all convince. The Greek historian's line of discussion shows that his remark about the troops 'constantly devising some new and fresh item' is, in reality, an unfriendly generalisation about the three specified claims—and his opening term, 'in short', itself implies this. The plural phrase 'the disputed points' need only indicate that the rations-compensation claim involved several aspects of detail. One obvious example was whether not only corn for the troops but also feed for the cavalry horses was to win compensation. Or the phrase may be a cliché, like referring plurally to the men's pay soon

⁹ Army's contempt and confidence: Pol. 1.68.6–7; 'ill-disposed and mutinous', πολλοὺς καχέκτας καὶ στασιώδεις, 68.10.

afterwards as ‘the matters of pay owed’ (using the plural *opsonia* for a change instead of *opsonion*).¹⁰

Both sides were still looking for a solution. As Eumenes’ pact with his mercenaries illustrates, there was much else that the men could have demanded but did not. They did not even call for grants of land, or Punic citizenship, for deserving Libyan veterans. The Carthaginians promised the army ‘everything that was feasible’—echoing the earlier promise to meet all the army’s demands ‘if it was possible’—and the soldiers agreed or even demanded that one of their old generals from Sicily should arbitrate on the disputed points. Polybius’ accusation about them ‘postponing agreement until it became impossible’ is plainly unfriendly comment again. He is looking at the situation from a critical viewpoint and anticipating the events to follow, not soberly claiming that the army now aimed at aborting negotiations.

Certainly there was nothing for the troops to gain by doing that. Two of their three claims had been conceded so far, and they trusted the man who was now given the task of arbitrating: their old commandant at Lilybaeum, Gisco himself.¹¹

On the other hand they were far from being in the best of moods. Quite the opposite: the events soon to follow indicate that the bulk of the army, Punic concessions notwithstanding, remained embittered, suspicious and all too easily provoked. Many no doubt thought (rightly enough) that the concessions simply revealed how Hanno had tried to

¹⁰ ‘On the disputed points’: 68.11 and 13 *περὶ τῶν ἀμφισβητουμένων*; ‘the matters of pay owed’, 69.3 *τὰ προσοφειλόμενα τῶν ὀνωνίων*; cf. 69.8 *τὰ μὲν ὀνωνία*. ‘In short’, *καθόλου*, introducing Polybius’ remark at 68.10, is pretty clearly a summing-up of his preceding account of the three detailed claims. Loreto, 66–67, sees Polybius (or his source) inventing the supposed further demands; he argues that, had they come from the official document which (so he assumes) set out the details of the first three, they would have been given in detail too. For him the three detailed claims reach such a ‘livello di specificità crescente’ that what else the men might want is hard to imagine (67). In fact Eumenes’ pact with his mercenaries shows that the demands made at Tunes were far from the only ones the men could have devised. Nor should Loreto posit that Polybius’ ultimate source was ‘una base documentale, forse dei registri dell’intendenza cartaginese’ (Loreto, 66, cf. 64). No doubt there were lists and registers for the Carthaginians and the troops to consult, but nothing points to Polybius having access to them. The most obvious feature of his description of the three claims is how tantalisingly brief they are, and with no money figures. Loreto does not note the possibility of Polybius’ remark referring to those three.

¹¹ Troops agreed to refer points to Gisco: Pol. 1.68.13, cf. 68.11 (cf. n. 7 above). Loreto (1995) 68–72 argues that Gisco was officially the new general sent to command the army, but there is no evidence for this and his rôle as arbitrator points strongly against it.

trick them earlier with tales about an empty treasury—and at the same time how ripe for the picking was the wealth of Carthage. Some of them had suspicions, as they soon made clear, of what the Carthaginians might do once the army began to disperse. The ‘ill-disposed and mutinous’ element, Mathos and Spendius in the lead by now, must have pushed these arguments as far as they could. Knowing of the discontent among the Libyan population would only encourage thoughts of sedition: for if the Libyans were suitably wooed, the Carthaginians would have trouble gaining support from them against an army whose largest contingent was Libyan.

The current leadership of the army plainly had no such radical thoughts, for they took up the arbitration idea. This was a gesture of continuing if limited co-operation. In fact they named Gisco as the army’s choice. Thus the army was asking for a Carthaginian arbiter—not for a military man from Syracuse, Egypt or Rome—and in effect promising to abide by his verdict on the rations claim. The fact that it would be one of the generals from Sicily indicates that the leadership, at least, believed that an arbiter who knew all about their Sicilian service would act fairly. All the same it may well have taken an effort to persuade the troops to agree and then hold them in line. Events show that when Gisco arrived he faced an army whose attitude stood on a knife-edge.¹²

While all this was happening at Tunes, what of Hanno the Great? He disappears from Polybius’ narrative after Sicca and reappears only after the revolt has begun. He would not have spent the weeks after Sicca holidaying. Careful planner that he was, it was sensible to take precautions, just in case some of the troops decided not to go quietly in the end. Even if they did all go, it would take time (by now it was late in 241) and the foreign units would need to be meticulously shepherded out of Africa. Besides, if the entire army of Sicily did disband, the republic would be left with nothing but Hanno’s reduced army of Libya as its military arm. This needed nurturing, and not just for internal security or new expeditions into Numidia. The Roman war was only recently over and those ex-enemies were surely watching the situation in Africa. Italian traders coming and going on business at both Carthage and Tunes could keep Rome up to date. The republic

¹² Suspicions in some troops: thus Spendius and Matho (Pol. 1.69.4–7). That the army asked for Gisco as arbiter is explicitly reported by Polybius later (1.80.12).

could not afford to show military weakness, and a general who let it do so would be in trouble.

Hanno must have returned from Sicca to Carthage to report. Now when given command against the rebels later on, his first move was to relieve Utica up the coast from siege. If his army left the city only then, he would have had to fight his way past the rebels at Tunes. There is no record of this happening. Yet Polybius stresses that the rebels had cut the city off from the rest of Africa. To meet this difficulty, some have sent him and his forces round to Utica by sea, a trip of 60 kilometres or so. But even if the season was not late winter or early spring—and it probably was, making it a bad time for sailing or rowing—an elephant corps a hundred strong transported by water would have been a risky enterprise, and there is no evidence for it. On a third view, the army marched over from Carthage but its artillery went round by sea. This does not solve the problem of how Hanno could get out to Utica without a fight when Carthage itself was completely shut off. It is better to infer that at some earlier stage he led out the reduced army of Libya for exercise in the countryside—and to keep up a more flexible surveillance of Tunes.¹³

One opportunity would be while the army of Sicily was en route from Sicca to the coast. The veterans were not advancing in attack mode. They wanted a settlement and had their women and children following them. So Hanno could leave Carthage to be protected by its impregnable fortifications, its citizens of military age, any retired veterans living there and any fresh mercenaries arriving in the new year. At least two experienced generals were still in the city, Hamilcar Barca and Gisco. Later on, when appointed to a command in his turn, Hamilcar had to find a novel way to lead his force out without confronting the rebel blockade. Meanwhile, if Hanno left before the

¹³ Rebels had Carthage hemmed in: Pol. 1.73.3, 73.5–6, 75.4–6. Hanno is usually seen as still there after the revolt broke out and the city was blockaded: e.g. Veith, 531; Gsell, 3.107; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.139; Huss, 258; Seibert, *FzH* 98 n. 59; Loreto, 130–31. Carthaginian responses to mutiny: Pol. 1.73.1–2. Hanno moves to Utica by sea: Gsell, 3.107, suggesting (*ibid.*, n. 6) rafts for the elephants (as had Flaubert, *Salammbô* ch. 6); also Huss (1985) 258. Hanno by land, artillery by sea: Loreto, *ibid.* Loreto supposes that Mathos' blockade of Carthage could not 'impedire il passaggio di un esercito disposto a dare battaglia' (130) and holds that later the blockade was strengthened (138; cf. Seibert, *loc. cit.*). This is implausible. True, Polybius gives details of the blockade only later (75.4), but he firmly indicates that it was in place from the outset of the revolt (73.3 and 5–6). On Hanno's artillery not being from Carthage, see below, Chapter 9.

soldiery from Sicca reached Tunes, that helps explain the Carthaginians' alarm at the latter's arrival and their readiness to seek terms. Otherwise Hanno's best opportunity would have been after a settlement had been worked out at Tunes and Gisco had started paying off the troops. Were he instead to march out while they were still negotiating and wrangling with the delegates from Carthage, it would be surprising that in their excited state they let even a small Punic army pass close by or, if they tried to bar its way and were pushed aside, that Polybius fails to mention this—unless we suppose his overall disdain for Hanno got the better of him.

Whenever Hanno exited the city, his still-small force was in no position to threaten the army of Sicily, whose self-confidence we have seen. Any recruiting he did had to be a slow process. By now it was winter; sea travel and travellers—including fresh foreign mercenaries—were at an end for the year. He could hardly risk forcing new conscriptions on the surly Libyan communities, or rely too much on such conscripts in any case. His purse for enlisting volunteers, deserters and any mercenaries who might happen by was small too, for huge funds had to be kept at Carthage to meet the costs of the agreement with the veterans.

But with these achieving their first pair of claims and referring the third to Gisco, and a seeming settlement then being reached, Hanno was under no obvious pressure. This explains why Polybius does not report strenuous military and financial preparations as yet. At present, all Hanno needed to do was keep himself informed about the demobilisation progressing (he thought) at Tunes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUTINY

Gisco had returned from Sicily around the time Hanno went to Sicca, for there was nothing to keep him at Lilybaeum once the last elements of the army had sailed. Whether he was a close friend of Hamilcar's or not, his association with the Roman-imposed peace—not to mention with the more and more restive returned troops—accounts well enough for why the magistrates and senate at Carthage had avoided making him a negotiator. Now they decided to send him to pacify the army on almost any terms. As mentioned above he came by water; it was well into autumn by now, but there was little risk in a short coastal trip. When he crossed to Tunes he and his aides brought along strongboxes of money. The republic was finding enough funds to pay what it should have paid from the beginning. The signals of repentance could not be clearer. He received a warm welcome from everyone at Tunes, even if in some cases the welcome was only skin-deep.¹

The money Gisco brought has prompted a surmise that even the claims for rations and ration-money had meanwhile been settled to the troops' satisfaction, without his own involvement. If so, he went to Tunes simply to pay off the army (and, on the theory mentioned earlier, to rehire it for new warfare). This would mean, too, that here again Polybius has misunderstood his sources; or else they and he chose to misrepresent things.²

¹ The idea that Gisco was still in Sicily (Carradice and la Nièce, 50) has nothing to support it. When he sailed to Tunes it was clearly from Carthage, since he brought funds with him. 'Well into autumn': as estimated above, the army and its entourage encamped around Tunes by the end of October; then much of November would have passed in the negotiations with the envoys from Carthage before impasse was reached over the *sitarchia*. Gisco's warm welcome: Pol. 1.80.12, though there Polybius probably overstates it to make a contrast with Gisco's later fate at the same men's hands.

² Carthaginian authorities had agreed to all demands before Gisco reached Tunes: Loreto, 69–70 ('il governo aveva accettato *prima* dell'invio di Gisco tutte le richieste' [his italics]). He of course sees the Carthaginians as wanting to re-engage the army (Ch. 5 nn. 13–14). Citing 1.69.5 διαλύσεις, 'agreement' (not Paton's 'negotiations'), as extra proof ignores the context: by that stage an agreement obviously had been made, for Gisco was now paying out the *opsonion* (69.3; cf. Walbank, 1.135). But the rest of Loreto's reconstruction does not follow.

But it is practically impossible to divine how Polybius could misunderstand sources who reported the Punic authorities and the troops at Tunes coming to agreement before Gisco sailed across the gulf with his money-chests. Nor is it any easier to see why Polybius or his sources should want to cover this up. It is not because he wants to give Gisco the credit for working out the agreement, for he does not claim this. He does not state even that Gisco did any arbitrating. Again, if his purpose instead was to blacken the soldiery—by depicting them as trusting Gisco to bring about an agreement, then betraying Gisco's own trust by imprisoning and maltreating him—he would have had no problem doing so without the need to manufacture nonexistent details. The events were ugly enough anyway.

Scepticism is suitable if there is no other way of explaining things, but it is unnecessary here. Polybius confirms that the troops, well-disposed to Gisco though resentful towards Hamilcar, did submit the questions at issue to the new envoy from Carthage. In the narrative they do this before he is reported sailing over to Tunes. On arriving Gisco met privately with the officers, then spoke firmly to the men about the situation, and after that started to pay off their arrears of *opsonion*, contingent by contingent. But not yet the sums due for 'the corn and horses': we find out later that he postponed these. Polybius does not state why.³

Gisco certainly knew the points under dispute before he left Carthage. The previous envoys told the senate what they were, and could have gone over them in detail with him as soon as he was appointed. Polybius' assertion that the troops informed him of their claims either means, in a shorthand fashion, that they required the returning envoys to inform him, or means—and this looks a little likelier—that they sent him their own statement. A letter or message could readily be sent to him at Carthage. While funds in cash were being collected and packed, he had plenty of time to consider how he would decide.

The money he took with him to Tunes was obviously enough to pay off the arrears of *opsonion*. These had been agreed on and so were not an issue in dispute. Neither was the compensation for the horses. Yet he put off paying this latter as well as the compensation for rations. One reason was no doubt to ensure orderly disbursements. Payment for horses long dead in another country all too easily invited exaggerated

³ For these doings: Pol. 1.68.13–69.3.

or invented claims. Even if the Carthaginians were prepared to put up with some exaggeration, some form of scrutiny would be necessary to keep it within limits. This would also restore a sense of order and discipline in the army, or so he may have hoped. As his dealings with the men show—starting with a rebuke to each contingent for its recent behaviour—Gisco chose to tackle his job in the style of a no-nonsense old general.

Another reasonable explanation for the postponements can be that he had not brought enough money for all the claims and was waiting on the rest to be sent from Carthage, where no doubt fresh and feverish minting was taking place. The arrears of *opsonion* alone amounted to thousands of talents. As for the rations-compensation, the Carthaginians' baulking at the claim suggests, as noted earlier, that it too was sizeable. But postponing payments for this and the cavalrymen's claims dangerously irritated the veterans, and Spendius and Matho used it to whip up the first stage of mutiny. Polybius may call Gisco's action a 'trifling pretext' for rebellion, but the men plainly did not see it so. Even if he just wished to keep the payouts orderly, they obviously suspected something amiss.⁴

This raises the question of his decision about the rations-compensation. The troops had accepted him as arbiter, he had learned what their rations-claim was and why it was a problem, and yet there is no report of what he decided. If he announced that much smaller compensation was warranted than the men demanded, the outcry would surely have been too furious for Polybius' sources to ignore, or Polybius himself. Besides, it would have been another example of honest Gisco versus selfish soldiery, a congenial theme for our historian. This all indicates that, whether or not he was waiting for more funds, Gisco intended to announce his decision on the horses- and rations-claims only when about to pay these. Perhaps he did mean to limit compensation as far as he could, especially for the claimed rations, and planned to do so only when the men already had plenty of money in their pockets from the arrears of *opsonion*.

Gisco's undoing was that he found himself dealing not with the still-obedient though rowdy troops who had marched out to Sicca, still less

⁴ Gisco's rebuke to the men: 1.69.2. First open outbreak of mutiny: 69.8–14 (Loreto, 71–2, does not see it as such but simply as the troops choosing new leaders). 'Trifling pretext': 69.8.

with the disciplined formations he had farewelled from Lilybaeum. Of course there had to be some who were as anxious as the Carthaginians for an agreement: many officers especially, and no doubt some rank and file men too. But they were in a minority. The soldiers were disillusioned and frustrated, having waited months for what they had expected to be straightforward early payouts and having got this far only by intimidating their old employers. Much even of the *opsonion* arrears they now received probably had to go in repayments to lenders who had advanced money for them and their families to live on all year. They had put their faith in Gisco to render them fair dues, but distrust and anger still smouldered. After all Hanno was still the military chief of Carthage, and Hamilcar, Gisco's old commander, remained prominent and influential in the city. Gisco's own bearing towards them, which he no doubt meant to show fairness but firmness, proved out of keeping with their feelings.

Polybius is both factual and vivid about events. Having given each ethnic division of the army its talking-to, Gisco began paying off the arrears to each division in turn. Since his talks with the officers and then to the divisions had to take some time, the payments will have begun two or three days after he reached Tunes. He first dealt with *opsonion*, payment of which—actual coins in bags or boxes—would take quite a lengthy time. Even with some fellow-Carthaginians accompanying him, Gisco could not oversee each individual payout, so the only practical way was to pay by divisions, through their officers. Thus each division-commander would present that body's claims, Gisco and his staff presumably checked it through, and once the total figure was agreed the relevant funds were handed over for the officers to distribute to their men. This method explains Gisco's sharp and fatal comment to the Libyans some time later.⁵

It cannot have been a fast process. The slow pace is evoked by Polybius via a literary touch. At this point he introduces and describes first Spendius and then Mathos, and only afterwards continues with the narrative in which they now play major parts. Spendius, the Campanian runaway slave, was supposedly in fear of being reclaimed by his old master and so opposed any settlement that would disband the army. Mathos, a freeborn Libyan who, as noted, came to the fore 'in the previously mentioned disturbances', feared being singled out for

⁵ 1.69.3, 8.

punishment if settlement went through, hence took the same wrecking attitude.

As Polybius tells it, Mathos gathered the Libyan troops to excite them into a version of his own anxiety: once the foreign troops had left Africa, the Libyans would be on their own to face the brunt of Carthaginian vengeance. He and Spendius then stirred up the whole army using the ‘trifling pretext’ mentioned above, that Gisco had not paid the compensation-money for horses and for grain. An increasingly furious soldiery began to lynch anyone suspected of a contrary viewpoint and, with feelings boiling over across all divisions, Mathos and Spendius were elected generals. Gisco even now urged peaceable outcomes on both officers and men. But an unfortunate insult to the Libyans caused his funds to be plundered, and Gisco and the other Carthaginian envoys to be thrown into prison by a now totally mutinous army.⁶

Polybius’ account leaves a number of items implicit or obscure. First, the extremist leaders’ complaint about unpaid horses-and-corn compensation implies that, by then, all the *opsonion* arrears at any rate had been disbursed. Again, the historian stresses Spendius’ keenness to abort a settlement, but does not go on to report him doing anything to achieve this: in the narrative Mathos acts first, and addresses only the Libyan contingent. Next, though, we find the two men together ‘attacking and accusing Gisco and the Carthaginians’ to a highly receptive assembly of the whole army. What Polybius surely omits, then, is earlier demagoguery by Spendius. He has left it to the reader to infer that the Campanian must have addressed himself to the mercenary bodies while Mathos stirred up the Libyans. As a result, when the two faced the full army assembly they had a largely—though not unanimously—favourable audience.⁷

Not only must this have taken at least a few days, but it illuminates Polybius’ reporting technique. By leaving implicit various items which, deliberately or not, he judges self-evident, he keeps up the narrative’s pace and involves his readers more closely by requiring them to be alert to implications. But as with the languages question earlier, concision has its drawbacks. We are left to infer that all the *opsonion* was paid off and only now do we learn that Mathos had become prominent at Sicca. It would have been useful had Polybius even briefly chosen

⁶ 69.4–5 (Spendius), 6 (Mathos); 69.7–70.5 (ensuing events), cf. next note.

⁷ ‘Attacking and accusing’, 1.69.9 διαβαλλόντων καὶ κατηγορούντων.

to mention him there; but he avoided this no doubt to highlight the Libyan's entry onto the scene now. Spendius too must have become notable at Sicca, for he and Mathos are shown as close comrades at Tunes, close enough to be jointly elected generals. Spendius is not likely to have become hostile to a settlement only now. His danger of being reclaimed by his old master, if Polybius is right about that, existed from the moment the war ended. But since the historian, for dramatic effect again, has not mentioned Spendius previously, he can mention his worries only now.

None of the mercenary divisions was specifically made up of Campanians or even Italians. The soldiers whom Polybius describes as 'mixed Greeks [*Mixellenes*], largely deserters and slaves', were most likely those in Spendius' division (rather than the Ligurians, the only other named Italic body). Even if they numbered only a few thousand—two or three thousand, say—they were still a major element of the mercenary forces, perhaps even the largest body. Once the Campanian runaway established his ascendancy over them, this made him a potent figure. For the whole army it was an invaluable advantage that he and Mathos got along well, as both in turn did (we later find) with the Gallic fire-brand Autaritus.

Spendius' origin and fears need not be rejected even if there is no evidence outside Polybius. Polybius records Mathos' freeborn status and there is no obvious fillip to his account from inventing a slave birth for Spendius: it is never mentioned again. Nor is he depicted with typically literary slave-characteristics like slyness, treachery and cowardice, but as an energetic and unflagging leader, undeniably cruel yet not more so than his freeborn colleagues—and enemies. The fear that his old owner would turn up to claim him might seem farfetched. But it was rational enough if his owner was, for instance, a Roman officer who had served in Sicily—Polybius describes Spendius as 'a Campanian and slave who had deserted from the Romans', which could mean from a Roman army—or one of the hundreds of Italian merchants who by now were flocking back to Carthage and doing brisk business at Tunes too. A slave of Spendius' energetic qualities would be valuable enough to seek back.⁸

⁸ Mathos freeborn: Pol. 1.69.6. His Punic name is *Mattan*, 'gift' (Lipinski (1992) 280). Walter (1947) 234–5 supposes that he only now came to notice. Spendius described: 69.4. De Sanctis, 3.1.374, rejects the allegations of his slave-origin and fear of being reclaimed as slander ('semplice diceria maligna'); so too Loreto, 109–10, who suggests

He and others like him in the army could, and maybe did, consider collecting their agreed arrears and sailing for safer territories (Egypt surely came to mind). Why he did not choose this course can only be surmised. It may be that, rightly or wrongly, he expected any future employer to have Roman mercenaries in service as well, and that trouble would follow once his background became known. Or he may have had a wife—Sicilian or Libyan most likely—and a family, as most of the troops did, and was unwilling to drag them away in a search for some distant or dangerous haven. Again, he very likely had ties of comradeship and loyalty to other slave-born mercenaries, who made up a sizeable part of the *Mixellenes*, and took his ties seriously.⁹

Mathos was a freeborn Libyan but so far only a noisy and thrusting rank-and-filer, to judge from Polybius' description as 'one of those who had also served' in the army. (The words can scarcely be taken to mean he had been a senior officer.) But by the time the army camped at Tunes he was effectively one of its leaders. The viewpoint that Polybius gives him is credible too. The foreign veterans could not easily have forced the Carthaginians to negotiate if the Libyans, who outnumbered them, had made their own arrangements for pay and discharge. Instead the Libyans had stood shoulder to shoulder with them. Now not only would the foreigners leave and the Libyans be disbanded, but Hanno would surely recruit fresh manpower for his army of Libya. The demobilised Libyans—and their communities—could foresee themselves at the Carthaginians' mercy.¹⁰

They could have foreseen it even earlier but, in the stress of events first at Carthage, then at Sicca, and afterwards at Tunes, it was natural

he had been a soldier's batman (*calo*) before deserting. Griffith (1935) 220 supposes him a rower in a Roman fleet; and Picard, *Hann.* 70, sees him as the real chief mover of mutiny. Flaubert's servile and flighty Spendius in *Salammbô* is an odd caricature. Italian traders: Pol. 1.83.6; below, Chapter 9. On 4th- and 3rd-Century Italian merchants (*negotiatores*) overseas, see Starr (1980), esp. 29–31, 57–64; T.J. Cornell in *CAH*² 7.2.410–11; E. Gabba in *CAH*² 8.224.

⁹ De Sanctis (loc. cit.) suggests that, had Spendius really feared for his freedom, he need only have agreed on his dues and embarked 'per lidi più sicuri'.

¹⁰ Mathos 'a free man and one of those who had also served': Pol. 1.69.6 ἐλεύθερος καὶ τῶν συνεστρατευμένων. The Greek participle indicates he had served 'along with' (συν-) his comrades, which indicates he was an ordinary ranker. Loreto, 105–7, cannot believe that Polybius would bother to describe an ordinary soldier thus, so strives to make Mathos a member of a hypothetical élite unit or else a general officer (even to the unpersuasive extent of emending the text to συνεστρατηγικῶν, 'had served as a general').

to put off looking or at any rate planning far ahead. Even after the angry march to Tunes many Libyans, like many mercenaries, expected an agreed settlement of all claims, since the Carthaginians so promptly conceded the first two. Gisco's delays then proved fatal. Suspicion could break out anew, all the more forcefully when fanned by Mathos and his friends. Gisco's slowness in paying the remaining claims and, it seems, leaving the Libyans till last, could look like an obvious trick to drive a wedge between them and the foreign troops.¹¹

Whatever the reasons for his slowness, it caused an eruption. When Mathos and Spendius harangued the army assembly—backed no doubt by allies like Autaritus—the bulk of the troops not only listened with enthusiasm but began stoning to death 'many of the officers and private soldiers' when they tried in their turn to speak. In the end, after some days of this, Mathos and Spendius were elected generals.

Polybius' telling of these events is graphic but as before leaves items out. Once Spendius and Mathos got feelings worked up, he writes, the men listened avidly only to them. Drunk and truculent 'after their mid-day meals' (an indication of several days of meetings) they tolerated no other speakers. Anyone else seeking to offer an opinion was met with shouts of 'Throw!'—Polybius uses the Greek word '*balle*'—and was stoned to death on the spot, the troops not bothering even to find out what the opinion might be. Many officers and private soldiers were killed like this. As a result, no one else dared speak out and Mathos and Spendius were chosen generals.

It is clearly hinted that the stonings and intimidation were orchestrated. The two would-be leaders did not want anyone else to be heard. Their own supporters like Autaritus were obviously not among those who tried to speak, though they must have been busy behind the scenes. The aim must have been not just to cow soldiers and officers who opposed a break with the Carthaginians, but also to deter any others at all who might seek election with—or instead of—Mathos and Spendius. The cry *balle* adds another clue. Polybius fairly plainly indicates that the Greek word was used and not its Punic equivalent: 'this term alone they understood in common because they did it continuously'. Here of course there is a sardonic tinge—the whole army learned what *balle* meant precisely from seeing it in action. But this implies that they did

¹¹ Gisco suspected of wedge tactics: so too Meltzer, 2.373–4; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.135–6 (oddly, he thinks that Polybius has Spendius alleging this).

not all know the Greek word as such, in other words that Greek was not a *lingua franca* in the army (and we have seen that Punic was closest to this). The cry, then, was first raised by Greek-speaking elements in the army and the first stones thrown by them. That points in particular to the *Mixellenes*—who pretty certainly were Spendius' division.¹²

So Mathos had the Libyans behind him, Spendius the *Mixellenes*. By now no doubt they had many supporters in the other divisions too. Moderates had been pushed into a minority and a forceful faction of extremists, in all the nationalities, took over. The faction's goals were plainly three: to silence opposition, sideline any rivals—for not every malcontent in the army, however bitter against the Carthaginians, would be happy to have Mathos, Spendius and their friends take charge—and install the two faction-leaders as the new commanders. Achieving these goals required time as well as bloodshed: this explains why there were several days of assemblies.

The new generals needed, too, to have supporters installed as subordinate officers or the coup would be incomplete. The way was cleared thanks to the lynchings they incited. Perhaps some moderate-minded officers and men survived by holding their tongues, but many took whatever opportunity they could to desert the army and head for Carthage. Officers surviving from before would already be extremists too, or professionals who could see safety in co-operating. Autaritus took command of the Gallic troops. Polybius implies the coup's changes when he mentions Gisco's continuing effort for peace. It included private meetings with the men's 'chiefs'—Polybius writes *proestotes* rather than his usual term for officers, *hegemones*.¹³

Choosing new generals or dealing roughly with unsatisfactory ones had some precedents in Punic armies. When Mago, an elderly Carthaginian general, had died on campaign in Sicily in 383 the men elected his son to replace him. During the recent war with the Romans, in 259, a defeated and obviously unpopular commander in Sardinia named Hannibal had been crucified 'by the surviving Carthaginians'. Of

¹² 'Throw!' (βάλλε); Pol. 1.69.10–13. Paton's paraphrase "'stone him'" can mislead, and instead of 'this term alone' etc. (at 69.12) he over-expansively offers: 'this phrase "Stone him" was the only one that became intelligible to all the different nations' (the latter eight words unsatisfactorily render κοινη συνίεσαν). Shuckburgh does translate βάλλε as 'throw', but is too free with 'there was not another word which was intelligible to them all in common'. 'Midday meals' (τῶν ἀρίστων); cf. Walbank, 1.135.

¹³ Pol. 1.70.2, τοὺς προεστῶτας αὐτῶν. So too Loreto, 75. Deserters: cf. 1.75.2.

course those armies had not been in revolt against the republic—quite the opposite—and their Carthaginian officers (and any Carthaginian rank and file) plainly took the leading rôle. Mercenary armies too elected fresh generals and other officers in pressing circumstances: most famously the Greek Ten Thousand in 399, when stranded in the heart of the Persian empire with all five generals and many officers arrested and executed by the enemy. Actions like these, well or badly remembered in mercenary armies' traditions, could prompt the actions at Tunes. Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus now saw themselves as the army's duly elected leaders, deserving recognition and respect from their old employers.¹⁴

Gisco and his fellow-citizens would scarcely agree such past events justified the present coup. But they still had to deal with the veterans, a task now full of danger. With patriotic self-disregard (so Polybius admiringly tells it) and in spite of the risks, Gisco amid 'the complete upheaval and confusion' continued his efforts, 'sometimes taking the men's chiefs aside, at other times gathering the men by nationalities and appealing to them.' During the previous days he must have been sidelined by the dramatic changes in leadership, for it is hard to visualise him getting a hearing at the same time as the men were listening to denunciations of him and lynching suspected moderates. He must have called his own meetings as soon as some level of order was restored.

At the same time the compensation payouts resumed, to one nationality after another. The *opsonion* arrears had been paid off before the recent upheaval, and during the upheaval one of Mathos' and Spendius' complaints was about the army not being paid its compensation for horses and corn. By contrast, some time after Gisco began holding his meetings the Libyans complained that they still had not been paid their *sitarchia*, in other words their rations-money. This implies that he must, by then, have paid off the cavalymen for their lost horses and begun paying—at long last—the claims for *sitarchia* although Polybius does not report this in so many words. Indeed Gisco's continuing efforts

¹⁴ Mago in Sicily killed in battle in 383 and his son chosen as replacement: Diod. 15.15–16. Hannibal in Sardinia crucified: Pol. 1.24.6; Livy, *Epit.* 17; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.81; cf. Zon. 8.12. Orosius 4.8.4 has him stoned to death. The Ten Thousand elect new officers: Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.1.47–2.1. Loreto, 71, holds that Mathos' and Spendius' elevation 'non fosse—del tutto—illegitimo'.

to pacify the army make little sense if all the other claims remained outstanding.¹⁵

The Carthaginian envoy was still hoping to end the crisis peacefully. The lynchings and the coup that elevated Mathos, Spendius and their friends were abhorrent and alarming, but they made the need for a peaceful outcome even more acute. Mathos already had messengers out among the communities of Libya calling for support for the army and confrontation against their Punic overlords (this was shown by the events soon following). Gisco, himself at Tunes, surely knew of the messages and knew, too, that Libya was a tinderbox awaiting just such a spark. The Carthaginians' one hope was to satisfy the army and disperse it as fast as feasible. Primarily this meant dispersing the foreign troops. Mathos' and his friends' urgings had already made a strong impact on them, as the divisional coups made plain. But if the mercenary units were prepared to accept their compensation moneys they might yet be encouraged to pack up and leave. With them out of Africa, the danger from the Libyans would diminish or disappear. So at any rate Gisco could calculate.

The way he handled the Libyans, putting off their share of the payments and then insulting them and their new leader, points to some level of disdain for the local levies. It was based on experience. Libyan troops had seldom shone in Punic service, hence the Carthaginians' use of mercenaries for their wars even if Libyans were also called up. It would take the military methods of Hamilcar Barca and his successors, still years away, to make Libyan units an element formidable against Roman legions. Hanno's army, small as it was, could be confident of dealing with Mathos and his men once they were on their own.¹⁶

Gisco miscalculated. The same rationale made it urgent for the extremists to act. Mathos' own men were impatient and suspicious, plainly for the same reasons. If the foreign veterans pulled out before the locals were fully paid, the Carthaginians would feel tempted—so the

¹⁵ Gisco's continuing efforts: Pol. 1.70.1–3. Mathos' and Spendius' earlier complaint: 69.8. The Libyans' later one: 70.3, where Polybius writes τὰς σιταρχίας. Translating this as 'pay' or 'wages' (implying *opsonion*), as Shuckburgh and Paton do, is mistaken; cf. Griffith, 289. Loreto (73) argues for *opsonion* on the ground that, at 1.66.6, Polybius uses the term σιταρχία when he means *opsonion*, but this is not an argument that can be pressed.

¹⁶ On Libyans in Carthage's armies, and their prowess under Barcid command, see Gsell, 2.357–60; Goldsworthy (2000) 32, 210–11, 214.

Libyans might fear, anyway—to find fresh excuses not to complete their payments. All that Mathos and his friends needed to do was feed this fear and they would have the break they wanted. Spendius, Autaritus and the other extremist officers already had the foreign troops primed to join in. The break came easily enough. The Libyan soldiery ‘had not yet received their *sitarchia*, considered it ought to be paid to them, and called for it arrogantly,’ Polybius writes. ‘Gisco, wishing to reprove their impudence, ordered them to demand it from their general Mathos.’ Just how this reply could reprove impudence is not obvious. The best explanation is that Gisco, as suggested above, had organised payments through the divisional generals but Mathos had not yet come for the Libyans’ money. Mathos had perhaps deliberately held back to add to his men’s restiveness, then blamed Gisco for the delay. When Libyan soldiers approached the envoy to demand payment, Gisco, unwisely irritable, answered short and sharp instead of explaining things in detail.¹⁷

Actual delay may well have occurred too, for we have seen that funds for the various payments very likely had to be sent over from Carthage in instalments. When Gisco made his sharp reply, he did have funds in his lodgings, which his accosters plundered. A plausible inference is that Mathos made the most of the delay, his Libyans’ tempers grew increasingly frayed, and then at last the latest consignment of specie arrived at Tunes. The Libyan troops thereupon confronted Gisco—forgetting or ignoring that their payments were to come through their general.

It is less plausible that Mathos, along with the other divisional commanders, had already received the Libyans’ compensation-money but was holding it back to provoke mutiny. A large payment from Gisco—in coin-packed chests or amphorae—would have been hard to hide in a camp buzzing with rumours, smouldering with resentment and full of suspicious observers. Besides, if the plan was to spark mutiny by accepting the funds (necessarily secretly) and then pretending the opposite, Spendius and the new divisional commanders should logically have done the same. Polybius’ account does not suggest this. He specifies the Libyans and implies that they felt singled out for unfair treatment. Besides, such a scheme would have been unpleasantly risky for the schemers, for Gisco might well succeed in showing the men how they

¹⁷ ‘Had not yet received’ etc.: Pol. 1.70.3 (my translation). ‘Reprove their impudence’: ἐπιπλῆξαι τὴν προπέτειαν αὐτῶν.

had been bamboozled by their own chosen leaders and turn the tide against these.¹⁸

The account in Polybius implies that the Libyans who accosted Gisco acted of their own accord, with Mathos and Spendius then exploiting the incident. This looks convincing, for if the historian could have blamed it directly on those two he had no reason not to. Mathos of course would not block the men's approach to Gisco. Almost anything the Carthaginian said would suit his purpose. Gisco's retort that they should get their money from 'their general Mathos' then so angered them—some may have wanted to be angered—that they plundered 'whatever money lay at hand', as well as seizing Gisco and his Carthaginian assistants. Now Mathos and Spendius did step in. 'Judging that the quickest way to kindle war would be to commit some act of illegality and ill-faith, they co-operated in the mob's fury', plundering all Gisco's official funds and the Carthaginian group's personal belongings. 'Outrageously' too they manacled their captives and threw them into custody, presumably somewhere in Tunes.

This description of events is circumstantially and carefully worded. The confrontation had two stages. Violence was begun by the soldiers who went to see Gisco but it was opportune and, so to speak, informal. Quite likely only a limited number took part, for it would be physically difficult for thousands of Libyans together to approach Gisco—and unnecessary. A delegation of newly-elected officers, and maybe some especially vociferous rank-and-filers, would be enough. Perhaps they spoke to him on the parade ground, with all their comrades looking on, during or after one of the meetings he had called. Likelier still they went to his lodgings in Tunes. This would account for Polybius' report of them going on to seize whatever money they found to hand, for it points to a confrontation in a confined space. There would still be plenty of people around to look or listen: Libyans, foreign mercenaries, and—not to be forgotten—traders and other civilians.

After the men's seizure of the Carthaginian envoys, it was the generals arriving at the scene who placed Gisco and his companions in chains and under guard. They thereby gave official recognition to their men's actions, and it was their treatment of the Carthaginians which Polybius

¹⁸ Loreto, 73, while holding that the money involved was *opsonion*, not *sitarchia* (despite Polybius' report), infers provocative chicanery by the men's officers, presumably meaning Mathos and his subordinates.

emphatically terms outrageous. This, and the generals' confiscation of Gisco's state funds plus the envoys' personal goods, amounted to the illegality and ill-faith that he accuses Mathos and Spendius of scheming. He obviously views Gisco and his confrères as ambassadors entitled to the sacrosanctity such persons always received (not as the new high command of the army, though that has been suggested). So it makes sense for Polybius to add that from now on it was open war with the Carthaginians.¹⁹

¹⁹ Pol. 1.70.4–5 (my translation); 'whatever money lay at hand', τὰ πρόχειρα τῶν χρημάτων; 'outrageously', ὕβριστικῶς. Loreto, 73–4 and n. 174, thinks only some Libyans remained unpaid (cf. previous n.), and sees just a hundred or so men taking part in the original confrontation with no involvement by their other comrades. But he recognises that when the generals intervened they gave the attack on Gisco an official stamp. Meltzer, 2.374, and Huss (1985) 255 do not distinguish the two stages.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIBYA REVOLTS

Mathos and Spendius had managed the outbreak skilfully. The extremists had to have a breach with the Carthaginians and it had to be at least minimally plausible. Gisco had unwittingly helped to play their game but, even if he had handled the Libyan troops better, it is very probable that their and their countrymen's grievances would still have found a flashpoint. The impetus to full-scale mutiny had been under way for a long time. By restraining it until the foreign veterans had been, or were close to being, fully paid, Mathos turned on its head any calculation by Gisco and the Carthaginians. For the instant response of the foreigners was to join in.

This shows that the extremists had prepared the ground with them as thoroughly as with the Libyans. The fact is all the more striking because the mercenaries had their pay. Even if some compensation was still outstanding they had been sure of getting it soon. Yet they might be unhappy still. Many would feel unsure about their future employment prospects—wherever they went, they would be marked as men willing to murder their own officers and comrades when annoyed. Even returning home with such a stigma would deter some, for some of the victims must have been fellow-countrymen.

There were no doubt other, suitably mercenary, calculations too. They had their long-delayed arrears from the Carthaginians, for whom they hardly felt much affection. Now a sharp successful revolt offered plunder and enrichment, at Carthaginian expense again. For one thing, the rebel leaders promised them substantial payments. Beyond that, the mercenaries could look not just for money and goods but—some of them at least—for land and a town or towns. Soldiers at the close of foreign campaigning were often so rewarded: Alexander the Great's city-creations, though not for his mercenary veterans only, are well-known examples, and Hellenistic kings often granted land to their ex-soldiers. In contemporary Egypt, discharged mercenaries were sometimes transformed into landed settlers at government expense.

Violent self-service by mercenaries to acquire property also occurred, sometimes not far from Africa. In 404 Campanian mercenaries in

Sicily had seized the town of Entella for themselves and were still there a century or more later. Around 288 the Mamertines, more Campanian military out of a job, had helped themselves to the historic Sicilian city of Messina. In 241 they were still enjoying life there, honoured allies of the Romans, as the army of Sicily turned on its ex-employers. It would be natural for some—even most—of the mercenaries at Tunes to crave a similar future, if they reckoned that one final forceful effort could achieve it.¹

Polybius reports Mathos promising to pay them their arrears of *opsonion* (he in fact writes the plural, *opsonia*). This is surprising, because Gisco had paid these off when he first came to Tunes. It might be that Polybius means not *opsonion* proper but the other arrears claimed—*sitarchia* and the cavalry horses—but this is unlikely, for his earlier uses of the plural either cover all three types of claim or mean just *opsonion* itself. To use it now for just the non-*opsonion* arrears would make no sense to either him or his readers. Whether the promised amounts matched just the men's *opsonion* or their other claims too we are not told. But matching even one year's *opsonion*, for the mercenaries alone, would cost 689 talents by the reckonings made earlier; and the Carthaginians had paid out a great deal more than one year's. We are told that, even when Mathos' promise was fulfilled the rebel leaders still had ample funds for prosecuting the war. The safest inference, then, is that Mathos promised to pay the mercenaries as much as the Carthaginians had paid in *opsonion*. Polybius, compressing as usual, fails to make the point clear.²

Polybius specifies the mercenaries, not the Libyan troops also. These may have received money, too, once it came in from the rebel communities, for headquarters at Tunes had plenty. But the Libyan veterans were by definition committed to the mutiny which they themselves had brought on. What was vital was to ensure the involvement of the

¹ Land- and citizenship-grants to mercenaries: Griffith (1935) 313–16. Mercenary settlers in Egypt: Griffith, 135–9; Launey, 2.682–8, cf. 1064–85; Hölbl (2001) 61–2. Entella seized in 404: Diod. 14.9.8–9; on its later fortunes see *Neue Pauly* 3 (1997) 1050. The Mamertines and Messina: Hoyos (1985); Goldsworthy (2000) 65–6. Acquaro (1989) 138 suggests the mercenaries had been promised land as well as money by Hamilcar and Gisco. Mercenaries' hopes from a successful war: cf. Hoyos (1995), under 'Sources'.

² Troops paid their 'arrears' by Mathos and Spendius, with ample funds remaining for the war: Pol. 1.72.6 (τὰ προσοφειλόμενα τῶν ὀψωνίων). Earlier uses of ὀψώνια: 1.66.5, 66.11, 67.1; probably at 68.8 and 69.3, and certainly at 69.8, it is a literary variant for ὀψώνιον. One year's *opsonion* for the army: Chapter 4 n. 5. Reckoning 11,333 drachmas a day for the mercenaries gives 4,136,545 drachmas = 689.4 talents over one year.

foreigners, seasoned veterans to a man. Without them the rebel army, already reduced through Spendius and Mathos' orchestrated killings and from desertions by an unknown number of unenthusiastic ex-comrades, would number scarcely ten thousand. This was not enough for both campaigning in the field and also training the keen, but largely green, Libyan volunteers soon arriving at Tunes. Promises of future rewards were rarely enough to hold mercenaries who had other options available. It was necessary to promise real money, payable soon.

A different interpretation holds what the mercenaries did was simply to take on a new professional contract—their old one with the Punic republic having become effectively null and void—with the rebelling Libyan communities against the republic. On this thesis, the mercenaries were not the Libyans' allies or partners but their employees. It rests partly on the term that was to adorn much Libyan rebel coinage: the Greek word *Libyon*, 'of the Libyans', seen as revealing a self-declared and (more or less) organised confederation—one which, as an entity, could hire professional forces and use such coin-issues to pay them. It rests too on the argument that, having been paid their arrears by the Carthaginians, the mercenaries would have left for their own shores had not Mathos and his supporters made them an offer too good to refuse. Mathos' payments are interpreted, in turn, as the mercenaries' first fees under the new contract.³

But whatever the nature of the Libyan state or confederation or alliance, the mercenaries had joined their Libyan comrades in mutiny ahead of the communities' revolt. Moreover the extremist faction's coup against the then leadership of the army, some days before, had probably been launched by the *Mixellenes* division. The mercenaries in other words committed themselves to confrontation against the Carthaginians before there was a Libyan alliance or confederation supposedly wishing to hire them. The extremist chiefs, Spendius, Mathos and Autaritus (Zarzas the Libyan was probably not on the scene yet), were acting in concert. Likewise Spendius and Autaritus are found acting more or less as Mathos' equals during the war that followed, not only in campaigning but also in army debates. Tellingly, it was the Campanian and the Gaul who later incited the army to new levels of atrocity so

³ Coinage with *Libyon* (ΛΙΒΥΩΝ); Carradice and La Nièce (1988) 50–1; Huss (1988); Acquaro (1989). Mercenaries took up professional contract ('ingaggio') with Libyans: Loreto, 92. Self-declared political, but not nationalistic, format of rebel Libya: Loreto, 87–113 (e.g. 110, ΛΙΒΥΩΝ 'cioè il stato dei Libi').

as to keep the war-effort from flagging. The coinage ‘of the Libyans’ meanwhile—if it does date to the rebellion, and not to thirty years later as has also been argued—says nothing about the rebel communities’ political arrangements; only that they acted as allies and needed their coinage to be recognised by the people (Libyans themselves, merchants and soldiers) among whom it circulated.⁴

The army bound itself by oaths ‘impious and against the shared usages of mankind’ (in Polybius’ view) as it faced its new war. Polybius does not record the oaths’ details, leaving his readers to make the necessary inferences as usual. What the rebels, foreign and Libyan, needed was a psychological bond that would keep them united amid struggle and danger. Drawn from all over the Mediterranean, with victory depending absolutely on total loyalty to one another, and aware of what their fate would be if the Carthaginians could exploit discord in their ranks, they turned to the universal rituals of solidarity. Nor are these the only oaths Polybius reports, for the women of Libya were soon to swear in their turn not to hold back any of their goods from the war-effort.

It is pointless to suppose that the army’s oaths are just invented to put the rebels in a poor light. Their general tenor would not be hard to infer: no man or division to make terms with the enemy by themselves, hostilities to end only when the Carthaginians made terms that the whole army and its allies agreed on, unquestioning obedience to their elected generals and officers, booty and slaves to be fairly shared out. If really impious and inhumane, rather than this being just a hostile judgement of Polybius’, they may also have bound the army (for instance) to reject ransoms for even high-ranking prisoners, and raze every Punic town they captured and rebel town that tried to defect. The more frightfulness they could show themselves capable of, the sooner the Carthaginians might seek terms. On the same calculation, no doubt Mathos and Spendius took care to have the oaths percolate to Carthage and other loyal cities.⁵

⁴ Spendius and Autaritus press for new atrocities: Pol. 1.79–80; below, Chapter 15. Zarzas’ appearance in the narrative: below, Chapter 17. Date of ‘Libyan’ coins: Chapter 12 n. 1.

⁵ Army’s ‘impious’ oaths: Pol. 1.70.6. Libyan women’s oath: 72.5. Loreto (1995) 74 doubts the army oaths as being ‘un topos connotativo di barbarie’ and because of the ‘indefinitezza del suo contenuto’ in Polybius. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.136, mentions respect for heralds and prisoners as examples of ‘common usages’. Strikingly, though,

A long struggle of attrition was certainly not what the rebels expected. The Carthaginians were intensely vulnerable and faced a desperate strategic situation. They had been ground down by the recent war, had lost their Sicilian territories, had just had to pay an enormous first instalment of the war-indemnity and even so could not be sure of goodwill from their ex-enemies. Military manpower was in crisis. There were still nearly 3,000 Carthaginian prisoners of war at Rome whom the republic could not afford to ransom. Most or all of its Libyan subjects had turned against it. The Libyphoenician sister-cities were still loyal but faced attack themselves. The army at Tunes was about to cut off Carthage from the rest of Africa. With the city isolated, help blocked and reinforcements heading to Tunes from the Libyan communities, Hanno and his army in turn would be little more than a nuisance.⁶

Given Punic military and naval weakness, Hanno's cautious leadership, the eclipse of Hamilcar Barca, the jailing of Gisco and the explosive unrest among the Libyans, the rebels could reckon that a sudden, bold and broad coup would shatter resistance. Not that Carthage was likely to be captured in the face of its mighty fortifications and desperate population. An earlier, purely Libyan revolt in 396 had supposedly concentrated two hundred thousand insurgents outside Carthage, only to collapse. But the rebels calculated on the city being worn down by siege, hunger and despair. Their own numbers were now 20,000 at best, and perhaps fewer, but fresh forces from the Libyan communities would soon be on their way. The two generals, their colleagues and their troops all but certainly expected not too much time to pass, or much work to be done, before Carthage begged for terms.

Mathos promptly sent word to the Libyan communities that the army was at war with the Carthaginians. A Libyan himself, he surely propagandised the war as prompted, partly at least, by the veterans' sympathy for their grievances and readiness to free them from Punic domination. He was certainly using this theme later. If instead he announced simply that the army was at war and would appreciate

it was not until much later that the rebels threatened to mistreat heralds and all future prisoners (Pol. 1.81.3–4; Chapter 16).

⁶ Punic captives at Rome: Val. Max. 5.1.1; Eutrop. 2.27; both give their number as 2,743, probably from a predecessor like Livy but going back ultimately to a detailed—not necessarily Roman—narrative.

Libyan help, the hugely enthusiastic response that Polybius records from towns and villages would be less easy to understand. Clearly the mutiny touched a live nerve among the Libyans. At once they viewed the veterans' cause as theirs too.⁷

By contrast the towns and districts that stayed loyal to the Carthaginians—most notably Utica and Hippacra not far north of Carthage—were not great assets to them at this stage. Utica and Hippacra were themselves soon threatened by rebel forces and needed help. Conceivably the Libyphoenician towns of Byzacium held firm for Carthage too, but the only hint of this is Polybius' silence about them; he writes only of 'the Libyans' rebelling. More likely, some places in Byzacium did join the revolt, even if not the old Phoenician colonies or not all of these: for in the last phase of the war Mathos and his remaining followers retreated to Byzacium to fight and die. Towns there that stayed loyal to Carthage—Hadrumetum, for a possible example—would have to keep on guard against hostile neighbours, and this would reduce what help in manpower or munitions they could forward to the city. Some of the loyal towns had rebel sympathisers within their walls, as Utica's and Hippacra's later defections imply. At present, secessionists and waverers in such places were plainly in a minority and any secessionist tendencies firmly checked—but Mathos fairly certainly managed to keep in intermittent contact with sympathisers. The only areas still loyal to the republic which could send Carthage supplies were the Cape Bon peninsula, across the gulf of Tunis—but it could hardly meet more than a fraction of the city's needs, least of all in winter—and Emporia, along the shores of the gulf of Sirte, whose contributions would need time to organise and then good weather to convey.

Little is known of the social and political structures among the Libyan peoples, but the basic pattern found at Carthage, Rome, among the Greeks and in other societies of the age (and in North Africa under Roman rule) can be inferred. Small élites, their wealth based mainly on land but, at some places, partly on trade too, dominated each its own town and district. In later times, long after the death of Punic Carthage, some towns had sufetes as chief magistrates, fairly certainly a long-established imitation of those at Carthage and the climax of local notables' public careers. If Libyan towns also had their own councils

⁷ Mathos' later freedom propaganda: Pol. 1.77.3.

and communal assemblies, as seems quite possible, these were largely the settings for the local notables' collaborations and rivalries.⁸

Libyans had plenty of links—of family, marriage, religion and economic activity—to other places, including Carthage and her Libyphoenician sister cities. They even had Carthaginians and the descendants of Carthaginians among them, if Aristotle is right in reporting that every so often, to ease social stresses at home, the authorities at Carthage sent out impoverished citizens to settle in other areas. This meant grants of land, since the purpose was to relieve them from poverty. Even if the areas most often selected lay within Carthage's own extensive territories (for instance the fertile Cape Bon peninsula) or at other Phoenician colonies like Utica, Hippacra and those in the rich Byzacium region, settlements from time to time in Libyan districts cannot be ruled out.

In any case it would be natural for quite a number of Carthaginians over the centuries, on their own initiative, to acquire property and live in Libyan towns or the Libyan countryside, often marrying locally. Some of them, or their descendants, would by now feel greater attachment to their Libyan home than to their ancestral one, while others would hold firmly to their Carthaginian connexions, no matter how diluted. The impact of Punic taxation on such people is not reported, but presumably varied from place to place—and tax-agent to tax-agent—depending on how much influence the settlers enjoyed. Varying too would be their response to the rebellion boiling up around them.⁹

Across Libyan territory there was thus a more complex pattern of population, communal relationships, and levels of grievance than Polybius' necessarily concise picture details. Not all Libyans, especially not all among the élites, can have favoured rebelling. Many or most of the officers in Libyan army units came from the better-off social levels, as did officers in Greek and Roman armies; and a number of them in the army at Tunes had been murdered during the recent extremist coup, either for opposing it or for being suspect. Their kinfolk and friends would not be highly enthusiastic now. There would be particular anguish

⁸ Sufetes, e.g. at Siagu (near Neapolis/Nabeul, *ILS* 6099), Thugga (6797), Avitta Bibba (west of Thuburbo, 6798), Calama in Numidia (6799); cf. Huss (1985) 470. The view that at Thugga and elsewhere the body politic was distributed into 'gates' (Latin *portae*: W. Seston, *Revue historique* 237 (1967) 277–94, based on *ILS* 6797), and was another Punic-Phoenician borrowing, is debated: Szyner (1978) 583–4; Huss (1985) 551; Ameling (1995) 165 n. 63.

⁹ Libyan intermarriage with Carthaginians: Gsell, 4.173. Poorer Carthaginians sent out as colonists: Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.11.15, 1273b; 6.5.9, 1320b.

too among the Punic-descended population, torn between their past and their present homelands. No doubt, then, the partisans of revolt in some towns and country districts brought their communities in only after a spasm of civil strife, driving out or even killing opponents real, suspected or pretended. Attacks on Carthaginian residents and visitors must have occurred, even if they fell short of mass murders (murders seem less likely, at this early stage anyway, with even Gisco and his companions spared at Tunes). Similar rough treatment was presumably handed out in reverse, against unpopular Libyans, at Carthage and the towns that stayed loyal.

Occasionally the revolt of Libya is judged as more than a political or even ethnic uprising. Social and revolutionary overtones have been hypothesised, to infer that throwing off Carthage's oppressive rule was largely the work of the downtrodden Libyan peasantry which had suffered the heaviest burdens. This is doubtful. Clearly the ordinary Libyan population, or a large part of it, was enthusiastic; so the large numbers of recruits, at the outset of war and again later, surely imply. Yet it was not a proletarian rising or some other version of rebel poor versus pro-Punic rich (an idea occasionally floated). For instance Polybius evocatively describes how the women of Libya 'swore oaths together not to conceal any of their possessions, took off their ornaments, and unhesitatingly contributed them to the war-funds', so enabling the rebels to amass their huge sums. No doubt Mathos and his confrères had other sources of money too: most obviously, the taxes hitherto paid to Carthage could now be paid to the war-effort. But the women Polybius describes are clearly affluent, owning jewellery and other valuables. In the same paragraph, his stress on the harsh treatment of both country folk and townspeople serves to underline other broad elements of the population with reason to rebel. So does the claim, exaggerated or not, of 70,000 army-recruits flocking to Tunes.¹⁰

Even more striking is that slaves did not—and were plainly not encouraged to—rise for their freedom. The earlier revolt in 396 had

¹⁰ 'Swore oaths together etc.': Pol. 1.72.5 (my transl.; 'ornaments', τὸν κόσμον (Paton paraphrases as 'jewels'); 'war-funds', τοὺς ὀψωνιασμούς). A peasant revolt or social revolution: 'surtout, le soulèvement en masse du prolétariat libyen des campagnes, exaspéré par l'oppression fiscale d'Hannon le Grand' (Picard, *Hann.* 70); 'the equivalent of the Proletarian and Slave revolts of the third and second centuries' which occurred elsewhere in the Mediterranean (*LDC* 202–3); 'seventy thousand serfs flocked to join' the army at Tunes (*LDC* 205). See also Picard & Picard (1961) 123–5; Warmington (1964) 204; García Moreno (1978) 72–3, 75–6; Barceló (2004) 59–60, 62.

been joined by plenty, and slave numbers in Punic Africa were substantial. When the earlier Hanno the Great tried to stage his coup around 345, he sought followers by promising freedom to 20,000 slaves (though the coup still failed). Had the rebels now offered freedom to slaves across Libya, they might have won even more enthusiastically committed volunteers. Had they offered it to the slaves in Carthage, a vital fifth column might have formed there to create trouble and even help force the Carthaginians to seek terms from their foes. Both Appian and Zonaras do claim that the Carthaginians' own slaves took part in large numbers, but of this there is no evidence. No doubt some absconders did, and the numbers would grow in some retellings.

Certainly there is no sign that the rebels, in the armies or the Libyan communities, liked or even considered the idea of freeing slaves. Freeing those in Libya, after all, would cost the Libyans themselves much of their workforce, and put pressure on them to grant acceptance and livelihood to the newly freed. Offering freedom to those in Carthage and loyalist towns may perhaps have seemed risky in turn, because it could stir up unrest among the slave population outside. When slaves do appear in the record of the Truceless War it is, gruesomely, as cannibal food for a trapped rebel army. In other words, the rôle of slaves in the war was the same as usual, as servitors to their owners.¹¹

The bulk of Libya's communities, urban and rural, declared for rebellion in short order. The rising embraced every level of society, all provoked to it by the Carthaginians' mistreatment and the priceless opportunity which the mutiny now brought. No doubt many people, of every social and ethnic group, went along with this only for safety's sake. For now, that hardly mattered amid the surge of enthusiasm. Only later did it become clear that loyalty was often guaranteed only so long as Mathos, Spendius and their comrades kept the upper hand militarily.

Polybius gives no indication of time-periods or season of year, in marked contrast to his narrative of the earlier war against the Romans. But as we saw earlier, early October was a reasonable estimate of when the army completed its encampment at Tunes. The detailed negotiations with the Carthaginians, with trips back and forth by the Punic

¹¹ Carthaginians' slaves allegedly joined revolt: App. *Sic.* 2.9; Zon. 8.17.9. Slave population: Huss (1985) 498–501. 4th-Century Hanno's attempted coup: Aristotle, *Pol.* 5.7.2, 1307a; Justin 21.4.6; Oros. 4.6.16–20; cf. Chapter 3 n. 3. Slaves cannibalised: Chapter 18.

envoys, and then Gisco's failed arbitration must have taken some weeks all told. As a result the final breach can be dated, if roughly, to early or mid-November 241. This has important implications. Northern Tunisian winters may not be as chilly as in lands still further north, but their average temperatures vary from 16 degrees Celsius by day to 4 degrees at night, and there is plenty of rain. Meanwhile, in the ancient Mediterranean sea-travel from October to March was too dangerous to be recommended except for emergencies. Mathos and Spendius could count on the Carthaginians, already virtually cut off on land, having little contact too with lands abroad for some months—above all, little contact with potential new mercenary recruits. This would give the rebels time to build up their own forces and put some sort of strategy into action.¹²

As soon as a sizeable number of recruits came in, presumably within three to five weeks, the generals at Tunes detached some of the enlarged army to place both Utica and Hippacra under blockade, while keeping close watch around Carthage itself. Hanno, wherever he had stationed himself, was still too weak to intervene. The year 240 opened with the Punic republic in critical danger.¹³

¹² Chronology of the outbreak: Hoyos (2000) 370–1, 'autumn or early winter' (and citing earlier discussions), cf. 379. Temperature ranges: Willett (1998) 24, gives charts for Tunes, Bizerte, Gabès and Gafsa.

¹³ Average temperatures and rainfall (of up to 13 days in January): P. Morris et al., *Tunisia: the Rough Guide* (3rd edn., London 1992) viii. Dangers of winter sea-travel: R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge 1990) 25–29; McCormick (2001), 98, 444, 450–67 (showing that early medieval sailors were rather more venturesome). Rebels besiege Utica and Hippacra: Pol. 1.70.9; cf. 73.3. Loreto discounts these moves and insists (129) that 'furono i Cartaginesi a prendere l'iniziativa'.

CHAPTER NINE

HANNO IN CHARGE

Were the Carthaginians taken by surprise by these events?

It had been obvious since the summer that trouble was brewing with the returned army. Nor can they have overlooked how discontented, and even hostile, the Libyan population had become. Hanno we have seen almost certainly preparing his forces for possible confrontation or, preferably, to deter it. The republic's swift capitulation to the troops' demands at Tunes proves it appreciated the seriousness of the risk. Even so, when the breach did come it was a shock. Practically up to the day before, Gisco had been continuing his payments and only the Libyans were still waiting. Mathos' and Spendius' dealings with the newly-elected mercenary officers remained behind the scenes until the outbreak. As a result, the appalling news from Tunes faced the Carthaginians with an emergency beyond anything they could have foreseen.¹

Polybius goes to some lengths to underline their terror. Because they had always taken their Libyan hinterland for granted as the source of food and revenues, its total defection put them, he writes, into 'great despondency and despair'. Already exhausted by their defeat in the recent war, now 'they had no quantity of arms, no naval force, no supply of ships'; moreover 'there existed indeed no arrangements for munitions, and not one single hope of friends or allies bringing help from outside.'²

This is vivid and emphatic but overdone. His own narrative soon begins to qualify each claim in detail. The bulk of the citizenry at Carthage may have felt despondent, even despairing, but they collaborated vigorously with their leaders in measures to defend the city and confront the rebels. Munitions were obtained, even a corps of war-elephants was mobilised, and the republic still had warships available to patrol the coasts. Supplies from the Emporia region, around the gulf of Gabès south of Byzacium, were organised, even if one sizeable later convoy is

¹ On Diodorus' contradictory explanations for the mutiny see above, Chapter 6 n. 2.

² Pol. 1.71.1–7 (translating from 71.2 and 71.6–7); cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.136.

recorded as suffering shipwreck. After a time, an expedition to Sardinia could be mounted to confront the island's mutinous garrison. And as for having no hope of foreign help, before long the Carthaginians were receiving cordial attentions from both the Romans, once a brief dispute with them was settled, and Hiero king of Syracuse.³

Polybius' opening stress on Carthaginian perplexity and despair thus aims at dramatic impact rather than factual precision. In the first days after the mutiny, with word coming in of the mass rising of Libya, such reactions did surely sweep through the city and every level of its population. The sickening fear they felt would be remembered long enough to be commemorated in postwar accounts. Offering them, unqualified, to his own readers need not seem to him too heinous a writing device (if he even thought about it): to any objector he could point out that the rest of his narrative sets the picture in proper context.

The Punic measures that modify his dramatic generalisations are then succinctly recorded. 'Appointing Hanno general... they gathered mercenaries and armed the citizens of military age; drilled and organised the city cavalry; and readied what remained of their ships, triremes, penteconters and their largest skiffs.' Polybius goes on to repeat his report of the rebels placing Utica and Hippacra under siege, and next describes the exposed and blockaded position of Carthage on its peninsula. This implies (though it does not prove) that the Punic counter-measures and the rebels' strategic initiatives occurred over the same period.⁴

It serves, too, as a literary device, indicating that all these moves took some time. This must be inferred anyway. By the time Hanno was able to take the field, the rebel forces had grown sizeably, they had blockaded Utica and Hippacra, and large sums of money were being gathered from the Libyan communities and spent. Again, some sort of supply-system to feed and support the various rebel forces had to be organised, even if a very improvised one. In mid-winter most food would have to come from stockpiles in the rebelling communities. Hanno had to rely largely on supplies from Carthage, at any rate to start with. We should estimate his ensuing operations against the rebels outside Utica as beginning roughly two to three months after Gisco's arrest—that is,

³ Emporia convoy: 1.82.6. Expedition to Sardinia: 1.79.3–4; below, Chapter 14. Help from Romans and Hiero: 1.83. Because 1.71.1–7 contrasts strongly with 1.73.1–2 (next note), Loreto posits two sources carelessly combined—'l'innaverito innesto disorganico di due fonti diverse'—with the first being a quite tendentious one (128–9).

⁴ Pol. 1.73.1–2 (my translation), 3–7 (rebel sieges, etc.).

sometime in January or February 240. If the weather was particularly bad, the starting-date could be put back perhaps to early March.

This was climatically a season quite suited to campaigning, though forage for cavalry and pack-animals would still be limited. Two decades later Hannibal would operate with cavalry as well as infantry in a wintry North Italy—latitudes much further north—with a crushing victory at the river Trebia late in December 218. Two centuries after, Julius Caesar seized Italy in a lightning winter campaign, from January to March of 49 by the inaccurate official calendar, in reality from late November in 50 to late January in 49. Hanno moreover had shorter distances to cover, wherever he began, for Utica lay only about 35 kilometres north of Carthage, and Hippacra another 25 beyond, at modern Bizerte.⁵

When Hanno went to Sicca he was still holding his command as general, as Polybius expressly attests. This makes the report of the Carthaginians now appointing him general something of a surprise. The usual explanation is that the generalship of Libya was more limited in scope than that of a general in charge of military operations, and so he now had to be upgraded. But military operations had been an important part of Hanno's doings in Libya, as of earlier Carthaginian generals there. So the likeliest explanation is that he was now called on by the Punic senate to command operations against the rebellion: not an extra legal empowerment but a political confirmation. For Hanno surely had his critics. It could be argued that his handling of the rebel army at Sicca was the root cause of the present emergency, even though he might retort that he had not been the only proponent of lowering the troops' arrears in the first place. More than one of the former generals in Sicily may still have been available too, and they had the advantage—like Hamilcar Barca and unlike Hanno—of knowing the rebels and their varied military ways.

Hanno's supporters had, then, to exert themselves to ensure he did stay in command. They could point out that the bulk of the rebel forces was increasingly Libyan, the area of operations was Libya, and no general was better acquainted with both. Polybius hints this is what happened: Hanno was given the command 'because he also had the earlier distinction of bringing the region of Hecatompylus in Libya

⁵ Hannibal's campaign in late 218: Lazenby (1978) 49–58; P. Brind'Amour, *Le Calendrier romain* (Ottawa 1987) 157–8. Chronology of 50–49: Brind'Amour, 35–6, 117–20, 123, 328–9.

under their power.’ His skills in raising money and organising military resources were outstanding too. The outcome may well have been a foregone conclusion, but still it was necessary for public confirmation that he would lead the war-effort.⁶

Hanno was not ready to strike right away, perhaps because his forces still needed strengthening. In any case his conduct of operations later on indicates that he was not a general given to swift or unusual action. That enabled the rebels to make the first moves and these came close to being decisive.

As mentioned earlier, the Libyan communities’ promptness, not just in joining the rebellion but gathering recruits and funds for it, shows that Mathos had been in touch with them well beforehand. The messengers he now sent to each community were the ones relaying the signal for action, and the Libyan response must mean that they had their preparations well advanced. Much the same was to happen in Italy in 91, when after protracted provocation from Rome a large number of her central Italian allies launched a plainly well-prepared offensive against her. The Libyan troops in the army cannot have been the only Libyans to have served during the recent war against the Romans, but how many of the new recruits had worthwhile military experience is not known. Rather too many lacked it, to judge from later events. But the inexperienced could at least be drilled by the army’s veterans, and the recruits brought enthusiasm and numbers.

It may have been now, as the moves against Utica and Hippacra were launched, that Mathos secured the one bridge over the lower course of the Bagradas river, some distance south-west of Utica (the location is debated). By summertime, when Hamilcar sallied forth from Carthage, there was a rebel ‘city’ beside the bridge, on the river’s south bank: hardly a city in a literal sense, but at any rate a well-laid-out encampment. This does not sound like a brand-new construction. Moreover Polybius describes the rebels’ positions from the start of the

⁶ Hanno general while at Sicca: Pol. 1.67.1 (τὸν ὑπάρχοντα στρατηγὸν ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ); also 67.9, 11 and 12 (here contrasting him with the generals in Sicily, not for having different powers but for not sharing the men’s experiences). ‘Because he also had the earlier distinction’ &c.: 1.73.1 (διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν τοῦτον καὶ πρότερον κτλ.). Generalship of Libya more limited than a generalship ‘in senso stretto’: Loreto (1995) 128; so too Huss (1985) 257 n. 24, cf. 478–9, and for other references see Hoyos (1994) 250 n. 7. Powers and functions of Carthaginian generals: Huss, 478; Wollner (1987), esp. 79–94 for this period; Hoyos, 249–56. Earlier generals in Libya: e.g. the Hamilcar who in the late 250s put down trouble by the Numidians (Oros. 4.9.9; Huss (1985) 237).

revolt, from Tunes to Utica, as closing Carthage off from the interior. This description would be less valid if people could travel by boat from the city over to the Bagradas and then inland up the river-valley, and vice versa.

Mathos himself, as is generally thought, may now have taken charge of the Hippacra siege. He does appear there a while later in Polybius' narrative. In the same way, Spendius is supposed to have commanded against Utica. If so the commander of the troops at and around Tunes would be Autaritus the Gaul. All the same, it is noteworthy that Polybius does not name the rebel commandant outside Utica during Hanno's operations there. Spendius is mentioned only from the outset of Hamilcar's. It looks just as likely, or more likely, that the two generals left unnamed subordinates to launch the blockades and see to the 'city' by the bridge, while they themselves kept busy with broader tasks.

In the first few months these were many. It was necessary to train (or retrain) and distribute the new recruits, put supplies—local and from overseas—for the enlarged armies on a sound footing, strengthen the blockade around Carthage, and collect and allocate funds including the new rebel coinage; not to mention stay in touch with, and even visit, communities inland to bolster support. After the Carthaginians started to fight back, however, the generals found they had to take the field themselves. Mathos then assumed command besieging Hippacra, while it was Spendius' misfortune to be in charge at Utica and the Bagradas bridge just as Hamilcar sortied from Carthage.⁷

The rebellion's opening actions were all done without Punic interference. Hanno moved only after he had completed fitting out his army with war-elephants and fresh recruits. As noted above, his whereabouts up to the outbreak of war are not clear but the most popular supposition, that he was still at Carthage, is implausible. The rebels had the city cut off from the rest of Africa and were making raids and sorties right up to its walls, with 'absolute terror and uproar' resulting among the citizens. Yet, when Polybius turns to Hanno's army, he shows it moving freely through the countryside around Utica. It seems likeliest,

⁷ Mathos' messengers, Pol. 1.70.8 ('envoys'), cf. 72.4. Outbreak of the *Bellum Sociale* in 91: A. Keaveney, *Rome and the Unification of Italy* (London 1987) 117–50. Mathos secures Bagradas bridge, Pol. 1.75.5; 1.5 km. north of La Sebbala (La Sebah on some maps), Veith (1912) Map 12c.g, and Loreto (1995) 131. On Gsell's location of it further upstream see below, Chapter 10 n. 9. Loreto thinks that Mathos secured the bridge only after Hanno marched by that route from Carthage to Utica. Mathos commands Hippacra siege, 77.1. Spendius first mentioned at Utica and the Bagradas: 1.76.1.

then, that he had withdrawn some distance from Carthage before the mutiny broke out.⁸

To recruit extra numbers, especially mercenaries, and perhaps obtain some more war-elephants a good area would be the prosperous coastal regions of Cape Bon and Byzacium. Cape Bon and, as suggested earlier, the Libyphoenician towns of Byzacium seem to have stayed loyal. They would afford him access to local supplies and to the sea (important for when the winter eased). Besides this, from that district he could keep in touch with Carthage across the gulf of Tunis, even sail over from time to time if necessary. Supplies and citizen recruits could be brought over to him likewise. Once the rebellion started, he had to begin operations by land, but he still had much strategic freedom. There were virtually no rebel forces in the field except near Tunes, Utica and Hippacra, except maybe groups of looters or foragers, and they would keep out of his path. And an army of 8–10,000 troops, its probable size by the time he moved, could overawe or ignore towns it passed, like Nephesis and Uthina east of Tunes if they had joined the revolt.

Other locations outside Carthage for Hanno's army before the revolt can be suggested, but none combines as many advantages. He might, for instance, have taken his army up the Bagradas valley, to Thurburbo Minus (Tébourba) or beyond, but there would be serious difficulty in keeping up contact with the city and enrolling reliable recruits. Another possibility would put him near Utica and Hippacra from the beginning, but then it would be hard to explain how—and why—the rebels put those towns under blockade or siege without first confronting him or being confronted by him. After all, he did eventually challenge those at Utica, but only after they had got the blockade going and fortified their own positions. It would be strange, if he were already nearby, for him simply to wait and watch the newly-arriving enemy going about their business; it would make him an even worse general than Polybius suggests. True, his army was very likely smaller than theirs, and there may have been rebel forces already posted at the Bagradas bridge. But if these factors held him back at the start, it becomes even more inexplicable why he eventually moved as he did.

As just mentioned, Hanno cannot have had more than eight to ten thousand troops. Much higher estimates have certainly been made,

⁸ 'Absolute terror and uproar', 1.73.7. On Hanno's whereabouts, above, Chapter 6 with n. 13.

as high as 30,000. Yet with that many or even with 20,000 he could have confronted the army at Tunes itself before Libyan recruits could come in. Or, had he chosen to avoid direct confrontation, an army that large would have been able to box the mutineers in around Tunes, with Carthage and its garrison—for, whatever the size of his army, Hanno had to leave defenders behind—menacing them on the east. For the same reason, as improbable as Hanno having more than 10,000 men is the garrisons in Utica and Hippacra numbering as much as this. Neither was a large town, nor is it plausible that the republic had something between fifty and sixty thousand troops—garrisons at those cities, Hanno's army, and a garrison in Carthage—available at the start of the rebellion.

Again, it is unlikely that the rebels at Utica numbered even the 15,000 reported later. At this first stage, with Libyan recruitment still under way, they would surely be fewer and so too the forces holding the bridge over the Bagradas: on a rough estimate, perhaps 10,000 and 5,000 respectively. Those besieging Hippacra would not number much above 5,000, either. The town, though important, was clearly less critical to the rebels than Utica, and its besiegers lent no help to their comrades outside Utica even after these had been worsted by Hanno, nor later on in the manoeuvring through the countryside near Utica, when just a few thousand extra fighters could have meant the end of him. In turn rebel headquarters at Tunes, facing Carthage with Hamilcar, its garrison, and fresh forces gathering, can hardly have had fewer troops than those at Utica and the bridge together. As the nerve-centre of the revolt, Tunes very likely had the bulk of the insurgents. At least twenty thousand should be estimated—veterans and new recruits—by the time Hanno appeared at Utica. This gives Mathos, Spendius and their confrères a total of some 40,000 soldiers in the field by the time Hanno launched his campaign, and as just noted the numbers were still growing.⁹

⁹ Hanno's forces: Veith (1912) 567, 571, estimates 30,000 at most; Loreto (1995) 123 and n. 45 gives him 20,000, while estimating the rebels outside Utica and Hippacra at some 25–26,000 each (120–1 and n. 23; he does not think the bridge was guarded at this time). Veith, 568–71, reckons 20,000 rebels besieging both towns but only 5,000 holding Tunes, again an implausibility given that Hamilcar had 10,000 troops to lead out of Carthage while a garrison remained in the city. De Sanctis, 3.1.386–7 and n. 11 (followed by Walbank, 1.139, 142), thinks the rebel forces at Tunes and Hippacra fewer than those outside Utica because they had less difficult tasks; and puts Hanno's strength around 15,000.

Polybius reports a grand total of 70,000 Libyan recruits joining the veterans at the very beginning. Scholars mostly disbelieve this figure, and rebel armies on field operations certainly never totalled so many. Yet there were other demands on Mathos and his colleagues besides armies in the field. The chief Libyan towns, at any rate near Tunes, needed protection: Maxula, Uthina, Nepheris and Thurburbo Minus—we can assume that most or all had joined the revolt—gave access to the sea or to productive coastal farmlands and the rebel interior. Local levies surely played a part in guarding them and others, but would not always be enough. Towards the end of the war, in fact, Polybius mentions rebel garrisons still in some towns (in or near Byzacium, it seems). Again, food supplies, arms and armour, and horses, mules and oxen had to travel from rebel areas to the coastal armies. After the war widened with Hamilcar's first campaign inland, if not sooner than that, such convoys needed armed protection, though they need not have received it every time. For all these reasons the rebels' organised military forces at their height may well have reached around the 90,000 Polybius implies. Admittedly, this is not literally how he tells it: he reports Mathos and the army at Tunes having the new 70,000 even before operations started against Utica and Hippacra. But this looks only like a convenient literary touch to dramatise the scale of the Libyan response. A good while later, more Libyan reinforcements are reported, this time to Spendius' field army somewhere in the hinterland. Rather than adding them to the 70,000, we should see them as another part of this total.

But for Mathos and Spendius to have even 40,000 in arms outside Carthage, Utica and Hippacra by the time Hanno made his move was quite an achievement. Arming and training thousands of recruits took time, though less was probably needed for any who came in with some previous military experience. But as developments showed, many of the rebel troops still remained deficient in discipline and staying-power.¹⁰

Polybius does not rate Hanno highly as a general. Introducing the narrative of operations, he presents the Punic commander's merits and demerits: good at organisation, but a different man on campaign. 'He handled opportunities ineptly and affairs overall inexpertly and sluggishly.' This unenthusiastic view of Hanno is usually supposed to come from a pro-Barcid source, but events indicate that it is not due purely

¹⁰ 70,000 new Libyan troops: Pol. 1.73.3. Later garrisons in towns, 87.7. Reinforcements to Spendius: 77.3 and 6–7 (Libyans and Numidians).

to such a bias. Hanno's choice of target was only the first example.¹¹

Wherever he was when the war began, Hanno did not move directly to Carthage's deliverance. Mathos' headquarters at Tunes and his strategic dispositions—holding all the heights between that town and the Bagradas, and the 'city' at the bridge—gripped the city in a landward vice. Hanno plainly was not the man to try anything bold or unconventional to dislodge them. He may have been right, for were his army to be crushed the republic would have no organised military force left. On the other hand there were thousands of men of military age in the city, some at least with military or naval experience; so too was Hamilcar. If anyone was organising the city's own human and material resources for defence it surely was Hamilcar, who soon afterwards became a general again and led forth an army got together within the walls. Some concerted manoeuvring by him and Hanno from opposite sides might have struck telling blows against the rebels at Tunes before many of their Libyan reinforcements could come in. Even if Mathos' men could not be dislodged from their positions, any kind of success over them might have slowed the tide of Libyan defections and raised spirits in the blockaded city.

Hanno avoided the Tunes area entirely and struck instead at the besiegers of Utica. Why he decided on this Polybius does not say. By implication, though, the general judged it too dangerous to tackle the main rebel forces (this holds whether he was advancing through the countryside or, as most think, only now sallying forth from Carthage). Obviously he had to do something. The morale of his fellow-citizens behind the walls and of his own army required it. Besides, if he kept right out of the rebels' way he risked being cut off from supplies and ultimately being crushed. Utica was the centre of the rebels' stretched-out strategic front. If this could be broken and the attackers of Utica defeated, the Carthaginian fightback would have two bases to work from, while the remaining enemy forces would be widely separated and thrown onto the defensive. All this as the seas reopened in springtime to put Carthage again in vital contact with the outside world.¹²

So Hanno 'first came to Utica to the aid of the besieged and struck terror into the enemy with the number of his elephants.' Plainly he

¹¹ 'Handled opportunities ineptly (ἀστόχως)', 1.74.2. Rebel forces at Utica later: 1.76.2. Polybius' and Diodorus' original source is widely judged as pro-Barcid and anti-Hanno: Chapter 24 n. 3.

¹² Strategic importance of Utica: Veith (1912) 531; Loreto, 129–30.

took the rebels by surprise, another sign that he had not been in the area earlier. If Mathos had already set a garrison at the 'city' by the Bagradas bridge, only 20 or so kilometres south of Utica, the besiegers were relying on those comrades to protect them from such a threat, or at least warn them of its approach. But careful movement by the Carthaginians through the hills inland, and by night, could circumvent this, especially if the bridge-garrison was careless or inexperienced.

Though the lower reaches of the Bagradas had only that crossing in Punic times—Polybius must mean this when writing that it was the only one, or else he misunderstood his source—there were others further upriver. For instance at Thuburbo Minus, modern Tébourba, on the north bank 40 kilometres west of Carthage, a road or path crossed over, and so did another at Tichilla 70 kilometres further west on the southern bank (today's Testour). The low mountain-ranges Jebel el Ang and Jebel Kechabta, running north-eastwards roughly parallel to the Bagradas' north bank all the way to the coast, and with a pass between them near Thuburbo Minus, could help to shield the advance until Hanno was quite near the Utica district. Again, the broad swampy region now called Garaet el Mabtouha, on the western side of the road from the rebel-held bridge to Utica, could lend extra cover. The rebels outside Utica might learn he was coming, but not be certain from what direction until he was practically on the scene.¹³

Utica stood on the coast, unlike today when river-silting has shifted the shore several kilometres further away. An eastward spur of the Jebel Kechabta ridge reaches to the site in the form of two hills, Jebel Douimis and then Jebel Menzel Roul, with flatter ground on either side and Utica at the far end of Menzel Roul. This peaks about 165 metres above sea-level and then slopes down to the site. Two or three kilometres east, a narrow finger of ground, barely higher than the plain, extends south to north, in ancient times reaching the sea in a similarly

¹³ Pol. 1.74.3 (my transl.). Only one bridge: 75.5. Thuburbo Minus: *Itin. Ant.* 44.1–3; Miller (1916) 842; the crossing led the road to Maius and beyond (*ibid.*). Tichilla-Testour: Miller, 934. The crossing at Mejez el Bab, between Tébourba and Testour about 50 km. south-west of Tébourba, does not seem to have been in use in ancient times. Low mountains: highest points are 668 metres above Mejez el Bab (Jebel el Ang) and 418 m. along the Jebel Kechabta only 7 km. north-west of Utica (Hallwag Map, *Tunisien Algerien*; Veith (1912) Map 12.a; cf. S.N. Consolo Langher, *Agatocle* (Messina 2000) 204 n. 15). Swampy region: Garaet el Mabtouha, 120 sq. km. (Chelbi et al. (1995) 17–19, 45–6); about 15 × 7 km. (*Barrington Atlas*, Map 32; cf. Consolo Langher (1992) 74, Cartina 4, 'Garaa Mabloaha'), in modern times edged by embankments and drained by canals (Mensing (1962) 111, Fig. 8).

narrow peninsula at a site later named *Castra Cornelia* (today *Galaat el Andless*). Between *Utica* and *Castra Cornelia* lay low and marshy ground. On the west side of *Menzel Roul* a low saddle or pass separates it from *Douimis*, a pass overlooked in those days by a fortification called the *Tower of Agathocles*. This dated, or was thought to date, to the Syracusan leader's invasion of Africa seven decades before.¹⁴

Polybius' statement that Hanno terrified the besiegers with his elephants is followed by a testy comment that, despite gaining 'the start of a complete success', he proceeded to bring near-disaster on himself and the Uticans. This is a summary of the events that he then goes on to narrate in detail, not a report of a separate opening clash which was followed by those events. His next sentence shows this. 'For, bringing from the city the catapults, missiles and in short all the equipment for a siege, and camping in front of the city, he undertook to assault the enemy's fortifications'; and the starring rôle of the elephants is stressed. This way of telling the events—summary followed by details—makes it possible to clarify their course.¹⁵

Hanno debouched probably from over the *Jebel Kechabta* ridge, for marshlands lay to *Utica*'s east and south. On the south side of the hills of *Douimis* and then *Menzel Roul* lay the marshy extent of *Garaet el Mabtouha*, on their north the then-existing shoreline. If a narrow strip of coast allowed it, or even shallow surf, he might advance that way for better cover. He pitched camp outside *Utica* without opposition and made contact with the defenders, a detail showing that the rebels did not have the town surrounded by entrenchments but were, instead, blockading it from their own fortified camp.¹⁶

Artillery and siege-equipment were brought 'out of the city'—but which city? It is usually supposed to be *Carthage*, which after all had

¹⁴ Tower of Agathocles: mentioned only by App. *Lib.* 14.56. Marsh between *Utica* and *Castra Cornelia*: Caesar, *Bell. Civ.* 2.24; on the terrain, Veith (1912) 580–3 and Map 13.a; Gsell, 2.144–6; Scullard (1970) 111–12; Chelbi et al. (1995) 16–19, 23–5.

¹⁵ Pol. 1.74.3 (my transl.). 'For, bringing from the city the catapults,' &c.: κομίσας γὰρ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως κτλ. Loreto, 131–2, thinks that Hanno forced his way into *Utica* through the rebels' siege-works, or found these incomplete, then came out again to attack their camp. But Polybius' report does not suggest siege-works at all. Loreto supposes (132 and n. 34) that χάρακα at 1.74.4 (he prints χάραχα) is a plural term meaning 'lavori di controvalloazione', and so must be distinguished from παρεμβολήν (74.5), the rebel camp. This notion vitiates his reconstruction, for χάραξ is masculine singular (τὸν χάρακα at 74.4, and cf. 74.11) and also, in military contexts, means a camp. See also n. 18.

¹⁶ Coastline at this period: Chelbi et al. (1995), especially 26–8, 45–51 with Fig. 13.

room for ample stocks of equipment. Yet ‘the city’ outside which Hanno encamps in the same sentence is Utica. Polybius may not be a great stylist, but for even an indifferent one to apply the same word twice in the same sentence to two different cities is hard to accept. Besides, a page later Polybius refers to ‘the equipment of the besieged people’ (meaning the artillery and so on) ‘which Hanno had brought out of the city to add to his other forces’ and then had lost. Plainly, then, this military equipment came from Utica. Hanno does not seem to have brought any with his army, for Polybius’ Greek shows that when he brought the war machines out ‘to add to his other forces’ this does not mean to other war machines.¹⁷

Utica, a town under threat, must have had artillery and other armaments at least for defence. The alternative, discussed earlier, is to suppose that Hanno had sent artillery up by sea from Carthage. But Polybius (quoted above) censures Hanno for involving not just himself but also the Uticans in near-disaster, plainly meaning the ensuing rout of the Punic army in Hanno’s absence and the enemy’s capture of ‘the equipment of the besieged people’. Hanno, then, had left at Carthage the city’s own artillery and other equipment. This is not surprising, for after all Carthage itself was under threat.

Bringing forth artillery and other machines of war indicates that the enemy had, by now, a defensible camp of their own. Not that a compact place like Utica would have a large collection of war-machines; but the move tells us both that the enemy had been in position long enough to strengthen their camp fairly impressively (a reminder of Hanno’s slowness in launching his operations), and that they were not surrounding the town with trenches and other siege-works but blockading it from close by. The camp, it seems, was defended by its own natural features plus felled trees and other resources, like timbers and beams looted from farms and villages round about. For no archaeological traces of fortifications—trenches, bricks or stonework—have been found on Jebel

¹⁷ ‘Out of the city’ (ἐκ τῆς πόλεως), 1.74.4; Shuckburgh and Paton paraphrase ‘from Carthage’; but cf. A. Mauersberger, *Polybios-Lexicon* 1.3 (Berlin, 1966) 1419–20, s.v. κομίζω; Walbank, 1.140. ‘[Equipment] which Hanno had brought out of the city to add to his other forces’ (74.12): ἦν Ἄννων πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐκκόμισάς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως. Paton mistranslates πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις as ‘and added to his own’, implying to his ‘own’ artillery; but τοῖς ἄλλοις is not feminine singular like παρασκευή, to which ἦν refers. Loreto (1995) 132 sees Hanno sending artillery from Carthage by sea.

Menzel Roul and, in fact, it was Hanno's elephants, not his artillery, that finally broke a way into the camp to chase the defenders out.¹⁸

With the rebel forces being not much larger than his, Hanno's army, based on his old one and with some months of training, and bolstered too by one hundred war-elephants, were a better than even match if competently led. This happened at first. The artillery quite likely played its part in intimidating the camp's defenders, allowing the elephants to move up and crash through its defences. Hanno's troops obviously followed, though Polybius does not bother to mention them, and the rebels fled save for some who were trampled by the beasts.

Here the story takes an odd turn. Instead of pursuing the enemy, Hanno called off his army. His men returned to the captured camp, apparently taking it for themselves, while he reportedly ignored all precautions for their safety and, 'entering the city [i.e. Utica], attended to the treatment of his body.' A plainly sardonic comment, this, and promptly followed by another: 'he thought he had finished the war and won complete victory'. Polybius blames this behaviour on Hanno's limited military experience. His only previous opponents had been 'Numidians and Libyans' who, once routed, kept fleeing for up to three days.¹⁹

But there is more to it than these belittling claims. Hanno, for one thing, cannot seriously have supposed that victory at Utica, however complete, had finished the war. The enemy at both Hippacra and Tunes were still undefeated, indeed were growing stronger. In any case

¹⁸ How to establish a camp: Pol. 18.18 (contrasting Greek methods with Romans); Walbank, *Comm.* 2.572–4. Loreto reports no archaeological trace of fortifications on Jebel Menzel Roul: (1995) 132 n. 38. His solution (132–3) is to place the rebels' position along the northern foot of this hill, with just 'un punto forte' higher up to serve as the παρεμβολή, and Hanno's 'contro-controvallazione' just outside the town walls. Elephants broke in, defenders fled: Pol. 1.74.5.

¹⁹ Hanno's troops used the captured camp: an insight of de Sanctis, 3.1.376, who all the same does not explain the point. Polybius, 1.74.10–11, mentions the Punic troops afterwards 'streaming out of the camp' or 'their camp' (ἐκ τῆς στρατοπεδείας), and the rebels counterattacking 'the fortification' (τῷ χάρακι, the same word used for the rebel camp at 74.4). Since Hanno's pounce had taken them by surprise, the economical interpretation is that his army took over their camp for its own use. Hanno ignored precautions, etc.: 74.7. 'Attended to the treatment of his body' (74.8), ἐγίνετο περὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος θεραπείαν; a moralising criticism according to Eckstein (1995a) 164 while Seibert, *FzH* 95–6 n. 52, suspects it as a hostile fiction. Neither entertains the possibility of a belittling reference to an injury. Flaubert's memorable picture of a repulsive, abscess-covered Hanno (*Salammbô*, chaps. 6 and 14) seems based on this one Polybian sentence.

he could see the rebels still outside Utica. Though forcibly de-camped, they had not taken to long-distance flight but rallied on a hill nearby, either the upper slopes and elongated crest of Menzel Roul or on Douimis further west. They had kept their armour and weapons too, as their counterattack shows. His own slowdown could have been due to a tired army, if it had marched a good distance at vigorous speed to make its surprise appearance. Hanno's own 'treatment of his body' looks like a played-down admission that he himself had suffered some wound, even if not a severe one.

The rebels' panic and disorder did convince him that, though huddled nearby, they posed no threat to his army in their annexed camp, guarded as it was not only by its own timbers, palisades and brushwood but by the elephant corps too. He may even have reckoned on renewing hostilities a few days later, once he had tended to his own needs and given his troops some rest. These felt equally confident after their success. The hills Menzel Roul and Douimis were as visible to them as to Hanno, yet they relaxed their guard and many left the camp, presumably to visit Utica and farms roundabout to buy (or seize) fresh food and goods. This was on the day after their success, or possibly even on the same day if the rebel camp had been taken in the morning.²⁰

Hanno underestimated the enemy's resilience. The veterans among them were old hands at Hamilcar Barca's hit-and-run guerrilla tactics in Sicily, as Polybius notes. They had been made to run; now they would hit back. The new recruits needed little encouragement. With Hanno's men streaming out of camp, the rebel army came down from its hill in force. It was the Punic army's turn to panic. 'They [the rebels] killed many of them, and forced the rest to flee disgracefully up to the walls and gates.' In other words the camp was recaptured, a neat retaliation for Hanno's earlier success. It was all the neater since the rebels were able to seize all the Punic baggage and artillery—which of course would much improve their chances of successfully assaulting Utica. This accounts for Polybius' earlier comment about Hanno bringing near-disaster on the besieged. He now adds the waspish aside that Hanno had, in effect, brought out the town's artillery to hand it over to the enemy.

²⁰ Rebels counterattacked possibly on the same day: Pol. 1.74.9, in this context, describes Hamilcar's tactics as involving retreats followed by attacks 'often on the same day'. Whether he wants to imply that it happened like this outside Utica is not clear. Loreto, 134, thinks the rebel counterattack came a few days later.

And yet, like the rebels themselves previously, Hanno's troops lived to fight another day. Campless, shorn of their war-machines and sheltering under the town walls, they might seem easy prey for the victors but—like Hanno himself earlier—these failed to press their advantage. Polybius does not report why. In fact, at just this point he loses interest in the details of this campaign, summarising the rest of it in barely seven or eight more lines (after devoting a page and a half to its opening phase). Obviously the Punic army remained in being, for Hanno soon resumed operations. We may guess that the elephants played a part in preventing a total rout and that some of Utica's own garrison sortied to help the army. Hanno himself may have come out to rally his men. Certainly his army did not take refuge in Utica. If it had, the rebels armed with their captured siege-engines could have shut it up indefinitely, whereas we find him in the countryside only a few days later.²¹

The army rallied under Utica's walls. Thus defied, the enemy drew off with their booty and (it seems) soon decided to withdraw some distance. Hanno, in the open with his elephant corps, was still dangerous. Food, weapons and other supplies—even some Carthaginian citizen troops, though not many—could be sent to Utica from Carthage in just a few days, which gave him flexibility. It looks as though he decided to play cat and mouse.

We next find him 'a few days later around a place named Gorza', encamped close to the rebels in their camp, almost in a replay of his and their initial positions outside Utica. Gorza is mentioned nowhere else, so what it was—town, village or district—is unknown. Other, later evidence names towns near Utica as Membrane and Uzalis to the north, and Salaeca to the west, but no Gorza. (The town of Gurza, 145 kilometres away near Hadrumentum and the gulf of Hammamet, is obviously out of the question.) Given the amount of damage inflicted in later times on the Libyan countryside, for instance during the Third

²¹ Rebel troops' experience of Hamilcar's tactics: Pol. 1.74.9. Polybius treats all the troops at Utica as veteran mercenaries but this cannot be correct, for the reasons explored above. 'They killed many of them', 1.74.11. Polybius' waspish aside, 74.12. *De Sanctis*, 3.1.376, thinks Hanno's defeat exaggerated by 'scrittori sfavorevoli' because he kept his freedom of movement, and this seems correct; but Polybius—though disdainful—does not claim a shattering defeat. Loreto, 134–5, makes the survivors flee into Utica for safety. Seibert, *FzH* 95–6 n. 52, treats the two mentions of artillery (74.4 and 12) as distinct and therefore contradictory. This fails to convince; the second mention certainly reveals Polybius as 'bewußt einseitig' against Hanno, but that is obvious anyway.

Punic War, Gorza—like Salaeca and the famous site at modern Kerkouan—perhaps failed to survive into Roman times. Or if it did, a change of name occurred, for example, transforming ‘Gorza’ into ‘Uzalis’. We must infer that Gorza lay not very far from Utica, since both armies were in its area only a few days after their mutual discomfitures.²²

Conceivably Gorza was important to the rebels, maybe as a supply dépôt or astride a valuable route: for instance, perhaps on the road from Utica to Hippacra, where the road has the northernmost edge of Jebel Kechabta to its left and a coastal range to its right, before descending to the eastern shore of Hippacra’s great lagoon, today’s Lac de Bizerte. Uzalis (modern El Alia) stood on the far side of this broad valley, on the slope of the coast range. If it was not Uzalis, Gorza might have stood on Jebel Kechabta’s slopes edging the other side of the valley, 7 kilometres to the west where a small town called Khetamine now stands; or maybe close to the lake, where ancient settlements of unknown name did exist.²³

Meanwhile the rebels, whether pursuing or just shadowing Hanno, had to ease the blockade of Utica. It would have been highly risky for an army not much larger than his if half of it stayed behind to keep this going. The pressure on Utica continued, for we find the town still under siege later. But on a guess it was kept up by only a couple of thousand troops plus the captured artillery—enough to keep the defenders in check but little else. Significantly, Polybius’ account has no mention

²² Gorza: Pol. 1.74.13. Membrane: *Itin. Ant.* 22; Chelbi et al. (1995) 18 Fig. 4 (6 km. north-west of Utica), 20, 29–30. Uzalis: P. Quoniam, *RE* 9A (1967) 1323. Just possibly, Gorza and Uzalis were the same town, showing varying names (Libyan and Punic?). Salaeca, less than 15 Roman miles from Utica, is only at Livy 29.34.6 and 35.4, though cf. Appian’s ‘Locha’, *Lib.* 15.62–3 (Huss (1985) 407). Veith (1912) 581 locates it at Henchir el Bey west of Utica, but in between lies the marsh of Garaet el Mabtouha; more likely Salaeca—whatever its real name—lay to the north-west, near the Lac de Bizerte. Appian mentions a town ‘Anda’ also near Utica (*Lib.* 24.97), but it too is not otherwise attested. His Punic-Wars place-names, like ‘Locha’, are often suspect. Gurza and its *pagus Gurzensis* near Hadrumetum (modern Kalaa Kabira 10 km. inland from Sousse): *ILS* 6095; *CIL* 8.69; *DCPP* 202 (E. Lipinski); C.R. Whittaker, in *CAH*² 10 (Cambridge 1996) 612; implausibly identified with Gorza by H. Dessau, *RE* 7.1950, and M. Leglay, *Kl P* 2.883–4. Loreto (1995) 135 supposes Gorza between Utica and the Bagradas bridge, but this would have allowed the latter’s garrison and the blockaders of Utica to join forces. Nor, given the Garaet el Mabtouha marshland (n. 13) and the nearby shoreline, would there be much room for operations.

²³ Khatemine: shown on Freytag & Berndt’s *Tunesien: Autokarte* (Wien 1996), where the Tunis-Bizerte highway is crossed by a lateral road from the coast to the lake. Ancient sites on the south shore of the Lac de Bizerte: *Barrington Atlas*, Map 32.

of other forces intervening. Yet Utica lay less than 50 kilometres from both Tunes to the south and Hippacra to the north. Hanno's army, the only Punic army in the field, might have been held by the rebels outside Utica and then cracked like a walnut by a pincer movement from the other sectors. At the very least he could have been forced back into Utica and there bottled up. For such a movement Mathos should have had plenty of troops to spare at Tunes, while the rebels outside Hippacra ought to have been able to detach some. Neither acted.

One reason may have been Carthaginian resistance in those quarters, unsung by Polybius. As the spring of 240 advanced, the Punic navy could put to sea, not for naval operations but to intercept overseas and coastal trading vessels doing business with the rebels. The foreign traders included Romans and Italians of whom, in the course of a few months, some 500 were arrested and their ships seized. We hear of this detail because it caused a Roman diplomatic complaint. Even though no other protests are reported, it is safe to infer that traders from other states—Syracusans, other Sicilians, Rhodians, Cyrenaeans and other Greeks—were drawn by the same lucrative prospects and many likewise ran afoul of Punic patrols. This obstructed the flow of at least some munitions to the rebels, notably overseas-made arms and armour, and (still more important) made access harder for professional soldiers attracted by Mathos' war-treasury. The rebel forces blockading Hippacra were furthest away from Tunes. They would have to rely on their environs for much of their supplies, and with Hanno in the way may have had trouble acquiring reinforcements. By contrast the Carthaginians could send some troops to Hippacra, as likewise to Utica, to strengthen resistance. There were certainly Carthaginian soldiers at both towns on a later occasion, even if not many (these were small towns, though wealthy).²⁴

In other words the blockaders at Hippacra would judge sending help to their comrades outside Utica too risky, for it would weaken those who were facing clearly resolute defenders. To abandon the blockade and march as a body against Hanno was just as risky. Not only might the defenders of Hippacra come after them but the still-

²⁴ Traders from Italy arrested: Pol. 1.83.6–8; App. *Iber.* 4.15; *Lih.* 5.21–2, 86.407; Zon. 8.18.9; Hoyos (1998) 124–5, 136–7; (2003) 37. See below, Chapter 11. Hiero, king of Syracuse, kept up good relations with the Carthaginians (Pol. 1.83.2–4) but this need not have deterred Syracusan merchants from dealing with the rebels. Punic troops later at Hippacra and Utica: Pol. 1.82.10; Chapter 16 n. 8.

inexperienced Libyan recruits in their ranks would surely lose a good deal of heart—and maybe decide that it was time to head for home rather than against Hanno.

Mathos' failure to send immediate reinforcements is harder to assess. He had troops, had already shown some sense of strategy and was a resolute leader. On the other hand, these advantages did not automatically add up to commanding strategic insight. In all the shifting fortunes of the war Mathos was never to shine as a field general; that rôle he seems to have left largely to Spendius. Besides, he knew that Hamilcar Barca was at Carthage; and may have known that Hamilcar was organising another army, though not necessarily its size. To send off some of his forces outside Carthage might expose the rest, plus his own headquarters, to a lightning strike by that master of the military unexpected, whose methods Mathos as a veteran knew well. In the end, presumably when his own numbers had grown further, he did send some. But by then it was too late.

At least in part, then, Hanno's freedom from multiple enemy threats is understandable. Polybius, his interest in the general of Libya now waning, merely reports that around Gorza his negligence repeatedly cost him the chance of a victory, twice in pitched battle and twice by a surprise attack. This looks like fairly repetitive field manoeuvring, both forces shifting positions warily not too far from each other, each looking for the other to make some slip that might prove disastrous while trying not to make one itself. Over so restricted a region of countryside this is understandable. Hanno could not risk getting close to enemy forces at either Hippacra or the Bagradas bridge. The rebels facing him, without support from their other comrades, would seek to avoid pitched battle but equally to keep him in sight (if he managed to seize and hold the Bagradas bridge, for instance, they would be cut off from Tunes).

Polybius' chronology is simply 'a few days later'. This is not as helpful as it looks. If literally true, then Hanno's activities, from the moment he pounced on the rebel camp outside Utica to the fourth of his missed opportunities near Gorza, would have taken up scarcely more than one week or two. Yet the four missed opportunities alone must have taken more time than that, even though it is not clear just how the misfired surprise attacks would have taken place or how Polybius can be so sure that a pitched battle would have been a Punic victory. His time-phrase indicates when all the camping and counter-camping began, as in fact it does, strictly speaking, in his Greek text. We should

allow a few more weeks after that—three or four at least—for Hanno's alleged bungles.²⁵

To Hanno no doubt these were not bungles but careful generalship. He was keeping the republic's one field army in being while further forces were readied at Carthage. Realistically, he could feel, this was about all he could achieve with the strength he had. After all the enemy's resources were still growing, while he was receiving no reinforcements and field supplies may have been difficult, including feed for the elephants (even if he had left some of these at Utica to help deter the blockaders). Yet too much caution was counterproductive. The rebels, after his fourth misfire or even earlier, revised their own strategy.

Mathos seems to have sent reinforcements around now, while Hanno's strength stayed the same or fewer. Equally important, Spendius arrived to take charge. With 15,000 men he refocused rebel energies on Utica. In fact, with their captured artillery they could now mount a regular siege of the town. Spendius simultaneously could keep Hanno at bay with part of his forces, either some of the fifteen thousand or other troops if these were available. Meantime the rebels in the 'city' at the Bagradas bridge, on Polybius' evidence, now totalled at least 10,000.²⁶

Hanno and his army were sidelined if not stalemated. At any rate they drop out of Polybius' narrative for quite a while. It is not at all plausible that they marched or sailed back to Carthage, and that Hamilcar then took over and led out part of the same army again. Hanno could hardly go back by land—Mathos' rebel concentrations around the city were on the lookout, as shown by both the strong garrison at the bridge and Hamilcar's need for a stratagem to exit the city soon after. A return by sea meets the same objection as did Hanno's supposed sortie by sea. And even if he left his elephants behind, the logic of re-immuring his army in Carthage would be obscure in any case. Again, it would have

²⁵ Hanno's four lost opportunities for victory: Pol. 1.74.13–14. In Polybius' text, the phrase 'a few days later' (μετ' ὀλίγας ἡμέρας, 74.13) is followed, not by the missed chances, but by '[the enemy] around a place named Gorza camping opposite' Hanno; the missed chances are then reported. The order of the phrases is worth notice. Loretto, 125, thinks the Bagradas bridge was Hanno's goal.

²⁶ Spendius' forces: to fight Hamilcar 'over 15,000' marched from the siege-camp at Utica and 10,000 from the 'city' by the Bagradas bridge (Pol. 1.76.1). Sometimes doubted, e.g. by de Sanctis, 3.1.377 n. 17 ('senza dubbio esageratissimo' and more likely 15,000 altogether); Walbank, 1.142; Huss (1985) 259 n. 58 'wahrscheinlich überhöht'.

dealt a severe blow to morale at Utica, yet Utica's resistance continued obdurate even against the strengthened rebel forces.

Most probably, then, Hanno withdrew to a safe spot—maybe to the coast north and east of Uzalis, where the coastal hills and the Punic navy offered some protection and supplies. His base could be the small town of Tunisa, 3 kilometres inland from the coast, or the little port of Rusucmon near the tip of the promontory. From there he could at least keep watch over the beleaguered Hippacritans and block direct contact between their rebel beleaguers and those at Utica, while Hamilcar made his move.²⁷

²⁷ Hanno's whereabouts: the coastal area around Tunisa (*Itin. Ant.* 22—the modern Ras el Jebel: Miller, 911), is narrow but productive, with several accessible beaches. Rusucmon could receive a Punic fleet in 203 (Livy 30.10.9) and was a notorious pirate haven, Porto Farina, in early modern times—Admiral Robert Blake checked it temporarily with a sack in 1655; today Ghar el Melh (Gsell, 2.146; cf. Huss (1985) 411 n. 60), named after a salt lagoon, a *ghar el-melh* in fact (Cook & Son (1913) 356), created by silting from the Bagradas when it flowed to the sea there: Mensching (1968) 108–9, 111 Fig. 8; Chelbi et al. (1995) 26, 49, 51; cf. Willett (1998) 168. By contrast de Sanctis, 3.1.376, leaves Hanno in a camp near Hippacra; and Loreto (1995) 122–3, 136, sends him back to Carthage by sea, precisely because Polybius makes no further mention of him for quite some time.

CHAPTER TEN

HAMILCAR'S FIRST VICTORY

Hamilcar and Hanno have usually been seen as long-standing enemies, political or personal if not both. This judgement is based on a furious quarrel between them later in the war, along with the well-attested political feud in ensuing decades between Hanno and his supporters on one side, and Hamilcar's successors and supporters on the other. But as we have seen, for 241–240 the view is not plausible. Hamilcar's long command in Sicily and his success in avoiding prosecution afterwards would be hard to account for if one of the dominant figures—or *the* dominant figure—at Carthage was a political foe. His return to military command sometime in the spring or early summer of 240 is not to be seen, then, as a blow against Hanno. It is true that Polybius more or less invites us to see it so. Because of Hanno's 'carelessness and lack of judgement' in the campaigning around Utica, 'the Carthaginians, observing that he was handling matters badly, again put Hamilcar, nicknamed Barca, in charge and sent him out to the war on hand as general.' This is biased, but not mere misrepresentation.

As often in the historian's account of these events, it is quite carefully phrased. Hanno was certainly not handling matters scintillatingly. 'Carelessness and lack of judgement' might be a harsh description, but even an objective Carthaginian would speak of over-cautiousness and lacklustre effort. Worse, the situation had gone downhill, for the rebels confronting Utica and at the Bagra das bridge now were stronger than ever. If the Carthaginians literally 'put Hamilcar in charge', it would imply making his authority superior to Hanno's. But in fact he then waged his own campaign, with Hanno elsewhere, while later events show that they were equal both in practice and probably officially.

Polybius' terminology reflects his own assessment and perhaps that of a source, keen to switch attention to Hamilcar and imply from the outset how preferable he was to Hanno. Yet it does not misstate the basic situation. Many of Hanno's fellow-citizens, including some in the senate and on the powerful tribunal of One Hundred and Four, could

see that further and more energetic measures were needed. To carry them out, there was only one general to call on.¹

When appointed to command, Hamilcar had an army ready. It did not spring down from the sky or from across the sea, and we have seen it was not Hanno's. It had been put together in Carthage. Polybius describes it as consisting of newly recruited mercenaries, rebel deserters, and citizen cavalry and infantry, plus 70 elephants. This force would have taken some time to build and train. Citizen levies must have begun as soon as the mutiny exploded, and deserters had been coming in from still earlier. But new mercenaries could arrive in significant numbers only when the spring season restored safe sailing. So too would the 2,700 ex-captives whom the Romans set free around this time, though these more probably reached Carthage after Hamilcar had left. For drilling and training, the broad garden-suburb of Megara, just west of the city proper but protected by its walls, and the open ground of the peninsula north of Megara (behind the modern seaside villages of La Marsa and Gammarrh) could be used.

Hanno, it can scarcely be doubted, knew of these preparations. As general of Libya he very likely had authorised them and left Hamilcar in charge of them. Hamilcar had been also the obvious (perhaps the only) choice to supervise the city's own defences in Hanno's absence. The new army would be just part of the forces in the city, for Hamilcar could not lead it out unless other troops remained as Carthage's garrison.

Conceivably the original strategy had been that Hanno should crush, or at least contain, the rebels around Utica—with a hope of weakening rebel morale outside Hippacra too—and Hamilcar would emerge as soon as practicable to join him, maybe in a two-pronged thrust against the rebels at Tunes. But any such plan now had to be amended. Carthaginian strategy continued to be dictated by limited resources: with his 10,000 troops Hamilcar could not challenge Mathos' Tunes forces.

¹ Pol. 1.74.14 ('carelessness and lack of judgement'), 75.1 (Carthaginians 'again put Hamilcar in charge', ἀνέθις προεστήσαντο). That Hamilcar had superior authority was argued by Hoyos (1994) 250; but contrast Loreto (1995) 137–8, and Hoyos (2003) 36–7. Meltzer, 2.377, and Veith (1912) 533, think the generals were equal but, like many others, implausibly see Hamilcar as gaining politically the upper hand; Huss (1985) 258 suspects that Hanno was actually dismissed; cf. Lancel (1992) 392. Gómez (1996) 280–1 implausibly compromises by keeping Hanno as a general but having him retreat into 'semi-private' life. On Hanno's and Hamilcar's politics before 241 see Chapter 3; also Hoyos (1994) 250–1, 264–6.

Utica, again under siege, needed renewed help; and a breakout towards that town offered, as previously to Hanno, an opportunity to bypass the blockade of Carthage, defeat the central concentration of rebels and open up the war. And unless some kind of impressive success was won soon, the republic would remain cut off from its hinterland and (even though sea traffic was once again open) would slowly strangle as funds, trade, resources and eventually food ran down.²

Polybius reports Hamilcar's opening moves in detail, rather as he did Hanno's but much more fully. This is in keeping with his largely favourable attitude to the new general. It does not of course prove he is drawing on, still less copying down, a Barca-friendly source. After all Polybius, as we have seen, is quite capable of putting his own interpretations and adding his own literary colouring to a narrative. He is just as likely using a variety of sources to fashion an account that he thinks concise but balanced (whether or not the modern reader thinks the same of it). Even so its level of detail varies. After the opening manoeuvres and Hamilcar's victory in battle beside the Bagradas, Polybius narrates what follows in much more abbreviated fashion, again like the preceding account of Hanno—at least until another dramatic moment, the episode with Naravas, arrives. What he judges worth abbreviating includes, unfortunately, a good deal of North African geography and much ancillary military detail.

Polybius describes Hamilcar's forces carefully. There were 'additionally enrolled' mercenaries, deserters from the enemy, and Carthaginian citizen cavalry and infantry, to a total of 10,000. He had 70 elephants as well. The idea that this was actually part of Hanno's force which the latter had led back into the city is not plausible: as shown earlier, it would have been difficult or impossible for Hanno to return and makes no sense as strategy. Besides this, Polybius indicates that Hamilcar's mercenaries were freshly hired (so 'additionally enrolled' implies); and only now does he mention enemy deserters. Of course some of these deserters would be the ones who had quit the army at Tunes during and after the lynchings, and others no doubt left it when the mutiny and the Libyan revolt began. Yet if Hanno had had a substantial contingent of them, there was no reason why Polybius should have

² Hamilcar's aims: so too, briefly, Loreto (1995) 140, 'di impadronirsi del ponte e delle fortificazioni nemiche' so as to 'guadagnare l'offensiva e portare la guerra nell'interno.'

left them out of his list of the Carthaginians' initial forces, only to put them back in now. A reasonable inference is that they had been kept under Hamilcar's eye until he could be sure of their reliability, and meantime they could help train his other troops.³

The biggest question is Hamilcar's elephant corps. If he had an entirely separate force of these animals, it means that at this stage the Carthaginians had 170 in harness altogether, a total some find hard to believe. It is not impossible all the same. For instance in 255 the Carthaginians had sent 140 elephants to Sicily, and this cannot have been all of their elephant corps at the time, since others had to be kept at home for African warfare. Again, Appian (as noticed earlier) describes Carthage's massive defensive walls in the year 149 as including elephant-stalls for no fewer than three hundred. Since by 149 the republic was effectively forbidden under its treaty with Rome from waging wars, these stalls should date back to older times. They need not have been regularly filled to capacity, but they show that 170 elephants were not beyond Punic capacity.

Many of the animals were probably left over from Hanno's earlier campaigns. Others could be fresh acquisitions that that canny general made in the months between his contretemps at Sicca and the mutiny, when as suggested above he was rebuilding his old army. Conceivably he shipped some of his own 100 elephants back to the city too, once the weather improved, to ease his own supply needs wherever he was in the countryside; if so, the Carthaginians' total corps would be less than 170. (If he did, incidentally, it would not be evidence that he and his troops came back as well.)⁴

Just as with Hanno's Utica operations, Polybius gives a résumé of Hamilcar's opening actions before going on to the detailed account. 'Rapidly in his first campaign he struck terror by the unexpectedness of his attack, lowered the morale of the enemy, raised the siege of Utica, and showed himself worthy of his previous achievements and the expectations of the masses.' Because not long afterwards Utica was

³ Hamilcar's army: Pol. 1.75.2 ('additionally enrolled mercenaries', τοὺς ἐπισυνηγμένους τῶν μισθοφόρων). Walbank, *Comm.* 1.140, rather oddly sees the army as largely a cavalry one. Loreto, 141, rightly infers limited cavalry strength, perhaps 1,000.

⁴ 140 elephants sent to Sicily in 255: Pol. 1.38.2; cf. Gsell, 2.405 n. 2. Elephant-stalls within the city: App. *Lib.* 95.448–51; cf. Chapter 4 n. 12 (but Scullard (1974) 274 n. 85 doubts the figure). Elephants in Carthaginian service, a 3rd-Century practice only: Gsell, 2.404–12.

yet again under siege, this is sometimes treated as mere pro-Barcid exaggeration or even falsehood. If it is, the best that could be done for Polybius would be to judge him stupidly inconsistent; or much worse, of deliberately regurgitating pro-Barcid lies—though still carelessly, since on this view he reveals the truth about Utica later on anyway.⁵

These conclusions do not persuade. As often happens when sources and source-analysis come under scrutiny, they rest on over-narrowly reckoning the possibilities. The function of résumés like this one needs to be stressed. Polybius is chiefly interested in the war's psychological and moral features, with a notably dim view of the morals and psychology of the rebels, and in Hamilcar's crucial rôle. These themes plus the need to keep his account relatively compressed explain, without always excusing, his various literary devices: résumés which free him to concentrate on specific items, details omitted if they seem—at least to him—necessarily implicit in or obvious from other events, the tantalising absence of most geographical aspects, and the sporadic, at best, attention to army strengths and losses.

With only 10,000 men and his elephants, Hamilcar knew that a sortie was a major risk. Mathos' blockade of Carthage meant that he could not move directly against Tunes or the rebel positions nearby. It also prevented him from marching towards Utica by the usual route. Had the transport ships been available which, as sometimes supposed, ferried Hanno's army to Utica and back, this would have been no problem—but we have seen that Hanno's movements had been quite different. Again, seafarers between Utica and Carthage, and any recent deserters, could give him at least a rough idea of enemy strengths at the bridge and the siege. He knew he would be outnumbered. The only chance for success was to live up to his nickname and strike like a lightning-bolt in a direction totally unforeseeable.

'He observed the mouth [of the Bagradas river] silting up,' Polybius writes, 'when winds came from certain quarters, and the passage across the mouth becoming shallow.' The Bagradas then reached the sea 15 kilometres north-west of Carthage, just east of modern La Sebbala (or Cébalat). With his troops primed to march but not told what he

⁵ 'Rapidly in his first campaign': Pol. 1.75.3 (my transl.). Utica not relieved: thus de Sanctis, 3.1.378 n. 18; Walbank, 1.143, 'part of the pro-Barcine exaggerations of P.'s source'; Seibert, *FzH* 99 n. 63, 'eine Erfindung der hamilkarfreundlichen Tradition'; Loreto (1995) 151–52.

planned—no doubt for security reasons—Hamilcar waited for the right wind to blow. He needed an easterly, and no doubt a strong one if it was to affect the fast-flowing river.⁶

As often pointed out, Polybius plays up Hamilcar's powers of observation. If the easterly occurred regularly, it must have been well-known at Carthage (to fishermen, for instance) and he could take no credit for the discovery. But as a regular occurrence it must have been known to Libyans too—and yet Hamilcar's manoeuvre took both the Carthaginians and the rebels by surprise. In other words he not only knew of it but, uniquely, realised he could make tactical use of it. Polybius states the first detail, and surely implies the second also. That the river-mouth silted up under certain winds is an untechnical description, perhaps Polybius' rephrasing of a source. For a temporary wind or gale to stir up enough silt from the river-bed to raise the bed's level would be both improbable and perilous—the silt would be loose yet deep, almost like quicksand. But that the silt-prone Bagradas built up an underwater bar across its mouth can safely be inferred, and also that a strong east wind could retard its flow enough to leave only shallow water over the silted river-bed and surrounding sands. These could then be waded over. The phenomenon can be seen today at the present mouth of the river, a few kilometres north of its exit in Hamilcar's day.⁷

The situation is rather like that at New Carthage in Spain thirty-one years later, where Scipio's surprise attack succeeded thanks to a fall in the level of the lagoon on that city's landward side: his troops crossed the shallows to take an undefended sector of the walls. Polybius' account of this feat is obscure in places too, though not in the same way. He makes no mention of wind causing the fall in the lagoon-level but ascribes it to tidal action—an impossibility in the near-tideless Mediterranean, even

⁶ 'He observed' &c.: Pol. 1.75.8 (my translation, fairly literal). Easterly wind: Gsell, 3.110. A strong wind needed: so too Seibert, *FzH* 98. Scullard (1974) 153 supposes that the 70 elephants 'would be useful for transport'. But they could not have carried more than 200-odd armed men in all or, instead, the arms and armour of a few hundred.

⁷ Ancient mouth of Bagradas/Mejerda: Gsell, 2.143–4. The wind-phenomenon judged well-known at Carthage: Seibert, *FzH* 98 (judging Polybius' praise of Hamilcar's move 'unmäßig', the move 'keine besondere militärische Leistung'); Loreto (1995) 139. Wind action exposed sandbar: similarly Veith (1912) 533; Kromayer & Veith, *SA* col. 10. Wind-phenomenon today: Chelbi et al. (1995) 20–2 and Fig. 7, terming Polybius' account 'au demeurant tout à fait plausible et réaliste' (22). Mejerda's mouth since 1973: Chelbi et al., 11, 19–22, 26, 47, 51. In quite recent times its mouth had lain just south of the Ghar el Melh peninsula (cf. Chapter 9 n. 27).

though the lagoon (now dried out) was connected to the city's harbour. Polybius' explanation is landlubberly; it is Livy, drawing on another source, who adds a wind to the imaginary tide, and wind action is the probable explanation at New Carthage in 209 as at the Bagradas in 240. But the essentials in both—resourceful general, unprepared enemies, skilful use of previously-ignored shallows—are in Polybius.⁸

Getting across the Bagradas was not Hamilcar's sole problem. It was crucial for him not to be caught on the march. Since the enemy held the hills east of Carthage that run from just outside Tunes over to the Bagradas itself by its mouth, his route had to be along the flat seashore (now the southern edge of the salt-marsh Sebkheth Ariana). An attack there could take his army in flank and drive it into the waves. To avoid this it would have to move by night. This was a ticklish combination: Hamilcar needed a fairly dark night, but not so dark that his men would have to use plenty of torches to see where they were going, and at the same time a powerful east wind. The fact that he succeeded may suggest that stormy weather—wind, rain and clouds masking his move—came to his aid. His troops, and the elephants with them, started by night from the city and as day broke crossed to the far side of the Bagradas, a march of some 16 kilometres. Jebel Naheli, the hills between Tunes and the river, would screen the army from view at Carthage, but Hamilcar doubtless sent word back after crossing to the north bank of the river and making for the bridge. Meanwhile the rebels were scrambling to confront him from this unforeseen quarter.

Where the bridge stood is debated. The ancient road to Utica from the south crossed the river north of a village called (in Roman times) Ad Gallum Gallinacium, which lay 15 Roman miles or 22 kilometres north-west of Carthage, about 11 Roman miles or 16 kilometres south of Utica. The modern village of La Sebbala, or Cébalat, marks the site. Since Polybius insists that there was only one crossing along the Bagradas' lower course, this area would seem the obvious place for it. If so, the bridge stood about 5 kilometres north of La Sebbala and roughly 8 from the river-mouth. But this has been questioned, for

⁸ On Scipio's capture of New Carthage (Pol. 10.6–15; Livy 26.41–46) see for instance de Sanctis, 3.2.451–3; Walbank, *Comm.* 2.201–16; Scullard (1970) 39–67; Lazenby (1978) 133–9, 314 Map 15; Antonia and Martín Lillo, *Historia* 37 (1988) 477–80; Hoyos (1992); Seibert, *FzH* 262–6 (harsh on Polybius' version of events there—'starke Bedenken'; 'Ungenauigkeiten und Widersprüche'), and *Hann.* 350–7; Goldsworthy (2000) 271–7. Polybius, incidentally, visited both old Carthage and its Spanish daughter and namesake (Walbank (1972) 11, 24, 120).

Hamilcar was confronted by the rebels from Utica as well by those at the bridge's 'city'. So in the time his army took to march the 8 kilometres from coast to bridge, first the news of his crossing to the north bank reached the bridge-garrison and also the besiegers of Utica—15 kilometres from the river-mouth and 11 or so from the bridge—and the besiegers then marched south to join their comrades in confronting him. In other words, rebel messengers (from coast to bridge, then from bridge to Utica) and Utica's besiegers had to cover at least 22 kilometres, all told, in the time it took Hamilcar to march less than half that distance.

To get round this difficulty, the bridge has been supposed farther upriver, by today's Henchir Bou Jaoua: 17 kilometres, rather than 8, from the ancient shoreline. In reality this makes things worse, for although Hamilcar would have had virtually twice as long a march from the river-mouth, the rebel forces from Utica would have had even further to come—20 kilometres at least, skirting the Garaet el Mab-touha. Another objection is Hamilcar's total marching distance. From Carthage via the ancient river-mouth to Henchir Bou Jaoua is around 32 kilometres. Not only would the Punic army have needed all night and most of the next day to cover that distance in a continuous march, but directly afterwards it had to fight a severe battle. Alexander's or Caesar's legendary veterans might achieve such a feat, but Hamilcar had a recently-assembled and heterogeneous force, complete with seventy elephants. The 24 kilometres via the river-mouth to La Sebbala was probably a feat in itself for his men.⁹

To see a problem in how word could reach Utica, and how the rebel forces from there could reach the bridge, all while Hamilcar marched just 8 kilometres upriver, requires arbitrary assumptions. First, that Hamilcar marched non-stop the 24 entire kilometres from Carthage to the bridge and promptly fought a tough battle. This hardly persuades. The night march from Carthage needed skill and care, especially with the elephants. Far likelier, the army and the animals took some rest—risky but essential—once they got across the Bagradas.¹⁰

⁹ Ad Gallum Gallinacium (or Gallinatium): *Itin. Ant.* 22; Miller (1916) 907. Bridge not near La Sebbala/Sebah but at Henchir Bou Jaoua (17 km. from both Tunes and the ancient river-mouth): thus Gsell, 3.109 (map), 111 n. 2, suggesting too (227 n. 4) that this was Appian's 'Anda' (though on this suspect name see Chapter 9 n. 22).

¹⁰ Loreto (1995) 141–2 also infers a rest after the river-crossing. Veith (1912) 534 n. 1 supposes Hamilcar was slow in getting his entire force across the river's mouth.

Nor must it be assumed that they were noticed only when they reached that point. Mathos' detachments held the Jebel Naheli, hills extending almost to the coast in those days. An outpost could even have been stationed down by the shore. If it was, Hamilcar easily frightened it away, but well before he reached that spot his movement had surely been sighted from the hilltops. He could not advance in pitch blackness or utter silence, whatever help the weather gave. But the outposts would not be strongly manned. The rebel concentrations were to the south, at Tunes and over by the bridge. Messengers from the hilltops could set out for those destinations while he was still hugging the shore en route. The garrison at the bridge in turn sent urgent word over to the besiegers at Utica.

Still, Mathos' and Spendius' strategic arrangements had not been outstanding. Clearly they had stationed no outposts, lookouts or even regular patrols on the plain between the Jebel Naheli hills and Carthage on its peninsula. Nor were the occupiers of the hilltops too vigilant. Had they observed Hamilcar's movement before he was well away from Carthage, the forces at Tunes and at the bridge might have marched to trap him pincer-like at the shoreline, with the Utica besiegers coming down to complete his destruction. Neither did headquarters at Tunes send at least a detachment to dog his heels, harass his rear, or even reinforce the bridge.

One reason for inertness, likely even if unmentioned by Polybius, was the garrison of Carthage. Who now commanded this we do not know, but perhaps the Hannibal who was Hamilcar's later lieutenant in the war or, less probably, Hamilcar's son-in-law and later successor in Spain, Hasdrubal. No doubt the garrison was fairly small, hardly above 10,000 strong itself (if two or three times larger, Hamilcar would have had no reason to sortie with so small a force as he did). But at Tunes they could not be sure how many armed men, newly recruited professionals among them, were behind the walls. It would take only a few noisy daylight demonstrations from the battlements to glue the rebels to their positions. Weakening their strength by sending off part of it in the opposite direction must have seemed too risky. Or it was simply outside their imagination, for with neither Mathos nor Spendius at Tunes the headquarters was in charge of (at best) Autaritus the Gaul, or else of some other strategic nonentity.

All the same, by the time Hamilcar swung upriver towards the bridge with his ten thousand, there were more than twice as many enemy troops moving against him, as no doubt he expected. Polybius reckons

10,000 from the bridge and 'over 15,000' besiegers from Utica in these formations. Oddly he does not make it clear whether Spendius was at the bridge or the siege. Its bigger numbers and demands suggest the latter, but Spendius had both under his overall command as his prompt orders to them show. He now made the right strategic decision. Both armies should confront the Carthaginians.

Spendius must have used fewer than 25,000 men for this move, for he would not and, we shall see, did not abandon the siege-camp outside Utica. He might well choose too to leave a skeleton force holding the bridge. Even so this released over 20,000 eager troops, a mixture as usual of veterans and Libyan recruits. He also saw to it that the bridge troops gave the division from Utica time to approach before they themselves moved out. It was a risk: if Hamilcar marched fast enough, he could fall on the bridge troops while their comrades were still too far off. But it explains how Hamilcar, advancing westwards beside the Bagradas, found himself facing Spendius' converging divisions.¹¹

The battle which resulted is, as it happens, the only one of Hamilcar's many engagements we find recorded in detail. This does not mean Polybius' account is fully clear. The usual push for compression, and some technical terminology uncertain or imprecise in sense, are responsible.¹²

Hamilcar was marching with the 70 elephants as vanguard, the citizen cavalry and light-armed skirmishers in the middle of the formation, and the heavy infantry behind them. For cavalry to keep station behind elephants was unusual, and any troopers scouting ahead or along the flanks are not mentioned. One suggestion is that his cavalry were too few to be given their customary leading rôles. But they were strong enough to play a powerful part in the battle and can hardly be estimated below 1,000. This was a reasonable proportion for the era.¹³

¹¹ Veith (534 n. 1) likewise sees the bridge force delaying its move until the Utica troops drew closer. For Seibert, *FzH* 98–9, the enemy's response seriously endangered Hamilcar and only his ensuing stratagem saved him (cf. Chapter 11 n. 1).

¹² Battle of the Bagradas: Pol. 1.76.1–10 (cavalry's rôle, 76.7–8); Walbank, *Comm.* 1.142–3; Thompson (1986). J. Gómez de Caso Zuriaga, 'Amílcar Barca, táctico y estratega. Una valoración', *Polis: Revista de ideas y formas políticas en la Antigüedad* 13 (2001) 33–68, on 50–3, adds nothing to existing analyses.

¹³ Cavalry too weak to take the van: Loreto (1995) 142. Cavalry about 10 per cent of an army: cf. Philip II of Macedon's 2,000 horse and 30,000 foot at Chaeroneia in 338 (N.G.L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 323 B.C.* (Cambridge 1959) 567–9). Hiero of Syracuse led 1,500 and 10,000 to his Longanus victory in 264 (Diod. 22.13.2); a Punic expeditionary army to Sicily in 262 comprised 6,000 and 50,000 (Diod. 23.8.1), and

Placed where they were, cavalry and light-armed were still performing their regular task of screening the infantry division. The light troops may have been fewer, or at most another 1,000. The two units in their turn were screened by the elephants. Heavily outnumbered and aware of it, Hamilcar needed these for any battle. Making them the vanguard gave some extra protection against frontal attack while the cavalry and light troops could, if necessary, fan out from his centre against flanking threats. Of course it meant that the entire army could move at only the same pace as the elephants. These had had to walk nearly 24 kilometres since the previous evening. Even if rested en route, they must have been fairly weary and not moving at all fast—another factor in the relative movements of the three military bodies now about to collide.

As suggested above, Hamilcar knew he had many fewer troops but aimed at bringing on a decisive battle. Spendius' two-pronged thrust from west and north could therefore scarcely surprise him. It is highly likely, in turn, that Hamilcar's reactions were planned. It had been obvious, long before he sortied, that wherever he might meet rebel forces he would be outnumbered. This virtually required his troops to learn at least a few more manoeuvres besides keeping line and charging on command: orderly retreat, for instance. The basic manoeuvres he made—troops first wheeling round in retreat, then round again to face forward—could have been practised within Carthage's walls and open spaces. At the same time, not all and perhaps not most of the army was veteran. Its manoeuvres had to be fairly straightforward, or chaos might result.

These reckonings are crucial to following Polybius' narrative of the battle. The two rebel divisions came within view of each other or, on another reading of his Greek, actually joined up like the two sections of a hinge. They were certainly near enough to each other to shout mutual encouragements, 'believing that the Carthaginians had been caught in their midst'. Seeing them rushing forward, Hamilcar 'instructed his whole force to turn around'. Next he 'ordered those who had turned around from the vanguard position to make their retreat rapidly; and

so did Punic forces in Spain on Hamilcar's death in 229/228 (Diod. 25.12); Hannibal sent 1,200 and 13,850 from Spain to Africa in early 218 (Pol. 3.33). But he equipped his brother Hasdrubal in Spain with 2,500 and 12,600 from Africa (ibid.), a higher proportion (20 per cent), and Hannibal's own cavalry strengths were usually greater again, around 25 per cent: an important ingredient in Barcid strategy and tactics.

wheeling round from their turnabout those originally forming the rear-guard, he deployed them to await the enemy's appearance.'

The advancing Libyans and mercenaries, thinking the Carthaginians were in full retreat, 'broke ranks, pressed forward and engaged them vigorously'. At this point Hamilcar's cavalry, now close to his infantry, wheeled about to confront their pursuers, 'and at the same time the rest of the army moved up'. Dismay and then disorder broke out among the rebels. They turned in panicky flight, only to run into those following up behind and fling them into equal confusion. Disaster ensued.¹⁴

There are various difficulties with Polybius' account. With one rebel division marching south and the other eastwards, it is not clear (for example) how they reckoned they had caught the Carthaginian 'in their midst'. Polybius' language might suggest that the bridge division had got between him and the river while the siege division moved against his other flank; but if so Hamilcar had moved away from the river's flanking protection, inexplicably. The answer may be straightforward. Hamilcar was marching with the river to his left; when he turned round, the rebels expected to overtake him before he could retreat far, pen him against the Bagradas, and so trap him 'in their midst'. Polybius is very probably writing for concision once again.

Much more problematic are the manoeuvres Hamilcar put his army through when he found Spendius' troops bearing down. As Polybius tells it, he ordered the entire Punic army to pivot into a retreat, with those hitherto forming the vanguard—technically this was the elephant corps, but it soon becomes clear that the cavalry and light-armed are meant too—told to do it rapidly. But the troops originally forming his rear—the regular infantry—he now 'wheeled around from their turnabout', or 'after their turnabout', to deploy them against the approaching rebels. Read purely at face value this looks like a recipe for the Punic forces, rather than Spendius', to collide in chaos: elephants and cavalry rushing back the way they had just come and, directly ahead of them now, the infantry reversing its own barely-begun retreat and facing about. But plainly there was no collision. Instead Hamilcar's various divisions

¹⁴ Pol. 1.76.2: rebels came 'within sight of each other', εἰς σύν~~ον~~πτον ἀλλήλοις (an emendation by C. Wunderer in 1894, widely adopted), or else 'joined forces with each other' (the MSS.) εἰς σύναπτον ἀλλήλοις; 'had been caught in their midst', ἐν μέσῳ ἀπειληθέναι (my transl.; Paton more loosely translates 'had caught the Carthaginians in a trap between them'). 'Instructed his whole force to turn around [&c.]': 76.4–6 (my transl.).

co-operated vigorously to shatter the rebels. Polybius' wording, then, needs some interpreting.¹⁵

The most obvious feature is, once again, compression. Hamilcar, having just ordered a general reversal of march, orders the lead formations to retire fast and—apparently at the same moment—tells the main division (the infantry) to do the precise opposite. Then once the Punic horsemen near the infantry body, they too wheel about a second time. The elephants and the light troops score no mention here, though the animals reappear before long. Plainly we must make (and Polybius surely expects us to make) inferences.

The clearest one, perhaps, is that the Punic army had not been advancing closely packed together: for if it had been, then the instant the cavalry turned to retreat they would have ridden full into the no longer retreating infantry right behind. Cavalry and elephants may have kept close together on the march, with the light troops alongside them or spread out in the gap between them and the infantry. So when the leading divisions did retire, they had at least that gap to cover before turning once more to face the oncoming enemy. And though mentioning just the cavalry at this stage, Polybius pretty certainly also means the elephants (and maybe the light troops)—just as in the same lines he writes of 'the Libyans and mercenaries', 'the Libyans', and soon after 'the Libyans and foreigners', unambiguously referring to the same rebel forces each time. For it was the elephants, along with the cavalry, that then inflicted the heaviest casualties on these shattered forces.¹⁶

Another question is what Polybius means by Hamilcar 'wheeling round' (*perispon*) the infantry 'after its turnabout' (*ex epistrophes*). Hellenistic military usage defined an *epistrophe* as a 90-degree turn and a *perispasmos* (the noun corresponding to *perispon*) as two of these, a 180-degree turn. But if Polybius uses the terms strictly he produces an implausible scenario: that on Hamilcar's first command, the westward-marching infantry turned left to face south or right to face north; then, on his second command, did a half-circle to end up facing the opposite way, either north or south respectively. This would have been complex, time-consuming and risky (particularly if the entire formation had to make the turn as one, rather than each man doing it individually). There was

¹⁵ 'Wheeled around after their turnabout and deployed' them, ἐξ ἐπιστροφῆς περισπῶν ἐξέταττε (1.76.5); see n. 17.

¹⁶ 'Libyans and mercenaries', 76.6; 'Libyans', 76.7; 'Libyans and foreigners' (ξένων), 76.9.

every chance of the troops falling into confusion or being caught with the manoeuvre still incomplete, just as the rebels closed in.

It has been argued that, as Hamilcar retreated eastwards, his northern flank was threatened by the Utica rebels and so he needed to turn the infantry towards them. But for this an *epistrophe* to the left was enough, whether his men had been marching in column or in line. Furthermore, Hamilcar had very likely arrayed his infantry in more than one column or line for the march upriver, because a single body of troops 7–8,000 strong would have been very unwieldy on a cross-country march. With soldiers arranged in columns, each man turning where he stood would give Hamilcar battle-ready lines facing north; if originally in line, a 90-degree turn by each individual would give him columns, again facing north. Yet this makes any *perispasmos* unnecessary. Besides, even if a plausible-looking reconstruction of events, a 180-degree turn cannot be squared with anything Polybius reports.¹⁷

On his showing, the entire Punic army reversed into retreat, only for Hamilcar soon to order the infantry (now leading the way) to reverse themselves a second time and advance. This means the infantry now retraced its latest steps. Once the retreating cavalry—with presumably the elephants and maybe the light-armed—arrived near the advancing infantry they too re-reversed themselves and charged. The infantry followed behind. The one difficulty with this scenario is Polybius' slightly earlier remark about the Libyans and mercenaries breaking ranks and rushing forward because they thought 'the Carthaginians had been caught in their midst'. As we saw, that implies a move, most likely by the Utica army, against Hamilcar's northern flank (his right flank when marching for the bridge, his left when in retreat). Now the two rebel armies had just caught sight of each other, or even made a junction, when some of them made their disorganised attack. They could certainly hear each other's shouts. One reconstruction therefore has them attack in a hinge-shaped or boomerang-shaped formation, the Utica troops on the northern side of the bridge troops, with the aim of striking the Carthaginians in two places—retreating rear (by the bridge

¹⁷ Thompson (1986) 112 analyses the technical senses of ἐπιστροφή and περισπασμός; and argues (113–15) for an ἐπιστροφή alone, with Polybius using the participle περισπών untechnically. His own examples (114) of military phrases with ἐξ/ἐκ show the prepositions there mean not just 'from' but more precisely 'after'. On marching, countermarching and facing about cf. P. Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (London 1981, repr. 1988) 83.

troops) and northern flank (by those from Utica). It then has Hamilcar check his infantry's retreat and wheel the division round to face north against the enemy from Utica, while his cavalry and elephants, and some of the infantry too, turn round to confront and confound those from the bridge.¹⁸

But this reconstruction hits problems also. Hamilcar's supposed counter-moves are not merely complex—he has, in effect, to bend his own army into a parallel hinge facing the rebels—but have very little support from Polybius. Again, if the rebel armies came on like a sort of hinge with its two pointed ends leading the attack, Hamilcar's counterattack against one or both would not have the effect Polybius reports. The Utica troops, when struck, would surely run away mostly north and north-westwards (with the marshy Garaet el Mabtouha a useful refuge). The bridge men, conversely, would flee directly westwards, towards their 'city'. Neither geography nor common sense would cause one wing of the hinge to collapse against the other. The only way for Hamilcar to drive the two together would have been to get his cavalry and elephants around the flank and the rear of one, a manoeuvre almost impossible with the rebels so close.

The very notion of the rebel armies advancing more or less together in a hinge (or boomerang) formation, and Hamilcar counterattacking both, does not fit Polybius' description of the second body of rebels being behind the first and only the first facing counterattack. Nor is the problem eased by interpreting him to mean that the fleeing front ranks, in both wings of the 'hinge', simply overran the remaining ranks behind them. No more persuasive is another view, that first Hamilcar's successive turns moved the elephants and cavalry onto his infantry's southern flank; next that this redeployment—which logically should have left the infantry division in full view of the rebels nearing from the north—instead screened this division as it wheeled leftward to change from retreating column into advancing battle-line; and then that these moves somehow resulted in the attackers from Utica charging into a void and into disarray. In the thick smoke and flame of a gunpowder

¹⁸ Reconstruction by Thompson (1986), esp. 112–15; criticised by Loreto (1995) 144 n. 50. Similarly Veith (1912) 534–5 sees Hamilcar's turns enabling his infantry to fall on the Utica rebels' left flank and the cavalry and elephants to strike at their front, prompting their flight and collision with the bridge army. Gsell, 3.111 n. 1, and Walbank, *Comm.* 1.142–3, favour this view. Diverging even more widely from Polybius, de Sanctis, 3.1.377, sees only the elephants retreating while Hamilcar's other divisions move out on either side of them to envelop the enemy.

battle, such a miscarriage might happen, but at the Bagradas it is hard to believe. Nor does Polybius' account, however compressed, coincide at all well with this reconstruction either.¹⁹

The scenario outlined earlier is both more satisfying and less intricate. It needs fuller description.

When the rebel armies came into view, still a good distance away across the countryside, Hamilcar halted his forces and signalled retreat. Since we find some space between his cavalry and infantry shortly afterwards, they were not it seems marching in tight formation, though not widely apart either. The rebels, with a retreating enemy before them, quickened their pace to catch up—losing cohesion in the process. It is important to note that both rebel forces must have done this. Not only does Polybius imply it but, if one force speeded up for attack, the other almost inevitably would follow suit so as to keep contact and lend support.

Spendius had, or seemed to have, various tactical alternatives. As indicated earlier, the rebels first supposed they could catch the Carthaginians against the river, presumably with the Utica division assailing them on their northern flank and the bridge division from the west attacking their rear. Or Spendius might let one division engage but hold the other back for a second, decisive blow as soon as they were fully engaged. Unluckily for the rebels, Spendius was neither a Hannibal (who did this at Cannae) nor a Napoleon (whose masterstroke in this style was Austerlitz). In fact he now seems to have lost control of his troops' movements. As the enemy retired eastwards—say a kilometre ahead—the idea of a flank attack was lost sight of, replaced by a direct pursuit. One of the pursuing bodies, probably the men from Utica, got ahead of the other and broke ranks, too. Now Hamilcar struck.

¹⁹ 'No more persuasive is another view': i.e. Loreto's (1995) 142–7, and 229 Map III. He accepts (142, 229) the idea of the two rebel armies advancing at an oblique angle to each other, but keeps them apart. From Polybius' phrase τὸς ἱππεῖς ἐξ μεταβολῆς ὑποστῆναι (76.7) he also supposes (143) that Hamilcar shifted his cavalry and elephants to one flank—specifically, the flank beside the Bagradas, as shifting to the other flank would have exposed them to the attacking Utica army (143 n. 43). But neither idea is plausible and the phrase means simply 'the cavalry, after a turnaround [cf. n. 17 on ἐκ], confronted them', i.e. the pursuers. Implausibly again, Loreto infers that with his manoeuvres Hamilcar 'fa sì che la divisione da Utica colpisca a vuoto e si sbilanci' (144). At Chickamauga in September 1863, a Confederate division did charge, with satisfying results, into a void unwittingly opened by a Federal unit transferred elsewhere, but besides the battle-smoke the ground was heavily wooded (James M. MacPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (New York and Oxford, 1988) 672–4).

First he stopped the infantrymen's retreat and, in Polybius' words, 'wheeled them round after their turnabout'. That 'turnabout' (whatever the technical sense of *epistrophe*) must mean their previous wheel into retreat; now they wheeled to face west again. Each wheel then was technically a *perispasmos*, though Polybius uses the related verb only for this second one. Next, as the cavalry (and elephants) came up in their retreat—the rebels now perhaps a disorderly half-kilometre away—he gave them the signal to do the same. Such manoeuvres were about the simplest that any army could learn, once it mastered the absolute basics of marching in formation and charging. The other essential was good psychology: steadiness in retreating before the enemy, readiness to attack when ordered. Plainly Hamilcar had trained his newly-formed army in the essentials.

The rebels (many of them recent recruits) not only found themselves about to be struck by elephants and cavalry in disciplined order, but could see behind them the equally disciplined array of over 7,000 heavy infantry. Disorganisation fused with panic into not a retreat but a flight. In their own rear their sister division was streaming forward, again in less than firm formation. Its men could not see exactly what was happening up ahead. The suddenly terrified flight into their ranks by their comrades must inevitably have triggered fears that a disaster had befallen. Next they saw Hamilcar's cavalry and elephants charging towards them, and already slashing down and trampling over fugitives. Their own panic is no surprise at all.²⁰

Polybius is not finished with compression and implicitness. The first force of rebels, he writes, in colliding with the second 'destroyed both themselves and their comrades', and 'many were trampled when the cavalry and elephants attacked them at close quarters.' Yet he cannot literally mean that the fleeing first army and the army behind it annihilated each other. Who would have been left for the Punic forces to slaughter, and what would these have been doing meanwhile? Less literally but more likely his point should be that the two sets of rebels came to blows, one perhaps trying to prevent the other from abandoning the field, and after some mutual bloodletting all were in turn overwhelmed

²⁰ 'Disciplined array': cf. Loreto, 143, noting that Polybius' terms ἐξέταττε and τοῖς παρατεταγμένοις (76.5 and 7) imply a phalanx in line of battle. Polybius again stresses the disorganised state of the rebels: they fled as 'scatteredly' as they had attacked (σποράδην, 76.7).

by the Carthaginians. To describe this as ‘destroyed both themselves and their comrades’ is a literary image, not a factual report.²¹

If the killing—6,000 rebels died—was done only by Hamilcar’s cavalry and elephants, it makes a rather large total, nearly 25 per cent of Spendius’ forces. Yet there were just 70 elephants and a thousand or so cavalymen. The infantry, following close behind, must have accounted for some too, and secured the 2,000 prisoners, but the size of the rebel losses is surprising if these were now in flight across the countryside. Elephants, unlike cavalry, could not keep up fast pursuit over long distances (they weigh several tonnes). But Polybius has shown that the battle was fought close to the Bagradas. He may leave us to infer, then, that Hamilcar succeeded in driving many rebels to the bank of the fast-flowing river, where they were cornered and destroyed by cavalry, elephants and infantry—and the light-armed troops picking off stragglers.²²

Spendius’ men who died like this did lend one last service to their comrades. These were able to escape while the Punic forces were busy, the surviving Utica besiegers back to their camp and those from the bridge garrison to its ‘city’. Demoralisation was complete all the same. Hamilcar promptly set out for the ‘city’, which cannot have been very far off. There, practically as soon as his troops launched their assault, the surviving defenders took to their heels across the bridge and over the Jebel Naheli to Tunes. Spendius may have been among them, for he is next reported at Tunes. This left the Carthaginian general free to turn his attention elsewhere.²³

²¹ ‘Destroyed both themselves and their comrades’ (76.9; οἰκείους is literally ‘kinsmen’—an indication that most of the rebel troops in both armies were Libyans?). The two remarks are balanced with οἱ μὲν and οἱ δέ, which usually points a contrast (‘some/others’).

²² Rebel losses: 76.9. Some rebels trapped on river-bank: cf. Hoyos (1999), in the section ‘Campaigns and fighting’. Loreto (1995) 145–6 thinks the Punic infantry played no part in the fighting, ‘abbastanza in sintonia con lo schema tipico delle battaglie di quest’epoca’. But this is a strange comment on an epoch that included the battle of Ipsus in 301, those of Pyrrhus against the Romans and of Regulus against the Carthaginians, Panormus in 250, Sellasia in 223 and Raphia in 217, not to mention during the Romans’ great wars from 218 to 167: infantry was prominent in all of these. On the period cf. A. Santosuosso, *Soldiers, Citizens and the Symbols of War: From Classical Greece to Republican Rome, 500–167 B.C.* (Boulder, Colorado, 1997) 148–200.

²³ Hamilcar captures ‘city’ by the bridge: Pol. 1.76.10. Spendius at Tunes afterwards, 77.1.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HAMILCAR TRAPPED

Hamilcar in his first operation had shown boldness—very unlike his confrère Hanno—and been blessed by luck. The smallness of his numbers had been more than compensated by rebel exuberance and indiscipline. His tactics of feigned retreat in face of the enemy turning into abrupt counterattack required troops confident in drill and in their leader, though as military movements they were (and Hamilcar surely meant them to be) the simplest in the circumstances. But to see them foreshadowing Hannibal's at Cannae or elsewhere, as is sometimes done, is hardly plausible. Nor are reconstructions that make them more Hannibalic persuasive, as shown above. A good deal more in Hannibal's style—enemy centre held by infantry and then surrounded by cavalry—was the victory over Regulus' Roman army in 255, thanks to the Spartan mercenary officer Xanthippus.¹

The victory at the Bagradas won back the strategic initiative for the Carthaginians. What Hamilcar did with his 2,000 prisoners Polybius does not say, but putting them to death would not have made a good impression on the Libyan population, which he was keen to win over. The economical thing to do was sell them into slavery (perhaps leaving

¹ For Loreto (1995) 147 with n. 67, the battle reveals 'una vera e propria scuola barcide' of tactics from contemporary Hellenistic warfare, with Hannibal in turn developing 'una tradizione militare di ambito familiare' based on '[la] manovra agile ed ardita contro il crescente appesantimento della falange ellenistica' (cf. Gómez (1996) 283). This misconceives not only Hamilcar's manoeuvres but the rebel attack, which was the opposite of a 'crescente appesantimento'. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.143, suggests that the last stages of the battle do foreshadow Hannibal's methods. But only against the Carpetani in 220 and at Lake Trasimene did Hannibal trap an enemy against a natural barrier (the river Tagus and the lake, respectively) and in neither case achieved it using Hamilcar's method. In turn, Hamilcar's hardly matches or looks much like the inspired complexities of Trebia or Cannae.

Contrastingly Seibert gives to rebel folly the credit for Hamilcar's victory: 'hätten sich die Söldner nicht durch dieses Manöver täuschen lassen, wären Hamilkar und seine Truppe vernichtet worden' (*FzH* 99). This can of course be said of the losers in any battle involving skilful tactics, for instance Leuctra, Cannae, Blenheim and Austerlitz. Xanthippus' victory: elephants and infantry held the Roman legionary foot while cavalry surrounded their flanks and rear (Pol. 1.33–34; Lazenby (1996) 104–6).

Hanno or the Uticans to do this). At least captured mutineers from the army of Sicily might be sold off. Captive Libyan volunteers he might, just possibly, send home on a promise of good behaviour, as he was to do with prisoners later.

Some Libyan towns began to reconsider their loyalties. The victory showed that the republic was not about to succumb to its attackers. This was a vital signal to the outside world too. Neighbours and former enemies, like Hiero of Syracuse and the Romans, could only be encouraged by it to continue being helpful. Had Hamilcar been defeated, their favour would have cooled, perhaps would even have shifted to the Libyans. In the worst case, the Romans might have been prompted to consider intervening in North Africa themselves, rather than allow Carthage to fall into the power of unpredictable insurgents.

It was mentioned earlier how the Romans had put in a complaint over the many Italian merchants under arrest at Carthage for trading with the rebels. With Cape Bon and the Byzacium coast, or much of it, still under Punic control, the only ready access for merchants dealing with the rebels was at Tunes and nearby—for instance the shoreline beside Maxula, just east of Tunes; perhaps too the siege-camps outside Utica and Hippacra. The tempting business opportunities these access-points offered were unpleasantly offset by vulnerability to naval patrols from Carthage. Quite a number of traders and their vessels must have been seized by the early summer of 240, for those from Italy alone numbered five hundred.

Luckily for the Italians, the authorities at Rome responded to their appeals, relayed, very probably, by fellow-merchants doing business at Carthage. Roman envoys arrived at Carthage. The Punic senate and sufetes promptly freed the traders. These no doubt recovered their ships as well, and maybe even their cargoes: for the Romans were so satisfied with the Carthaginians' cooperativeness that they stepped up their own aid to the republic. Italian traders were from now on forbidden to deal with the rebels at all but authorised 'to deliver every necessity to the Carthaginians'. Just as welcome, the remaining Punic war-captives in Roman hands were sent home in a reciprocal gesture of liberation. We learn from later writers that they numbered 2,743. These prisoners were probably Carthaginian citizens, maybe also Libyphoenician allies. Ordinary Libyan soldiers would have been sold as slaves in the customary way long ago (nor would freeing Libyans now be clearly helpful to Carthage, given their uncertain loyalty). The captives were

languishing in Italy, it can be inferred, because the Carthaginians and their hard-pressed allies had no money available for ransoming them. Nearly three thousand returned soldiers were a valuable reinforcement to the city's manpower.²

If Appian and the Byzantine précis-maker Zonaras can be believed, the Romans also waived the clause in the recent peace treaty banning the Carthaginians from hiring Italian mercenaries. Polybius does not mention this, but he tells the whole traders-episode as a flashback from much later in the war, when further Roman goodwill acts occurred that were more relevant to his narrative. Italian mercenaries were as good as Greek ones and, like all professional troops, were reliable—so long as pay was regular—even against fellow-countrymen.

The Carthaginians' difficulties, already stressed (if exaggeratedly) by Polybius, would include financial woes. The 1,000 talents paid immediately as part of the peace with the Romans had been a heavy cost, and only a few months later virtually all the revenues from Libya stopped. At the same time, fresh mercenaries had to be hired, weapons, armour and maybe more elephants acquired, supplies built up and the city's defences made ready. But the peace treaty required 220 talents a year to be sent to Rome as war-indemnity. It would have been a real act of goodwill by their former foes to waive, or at least defer, payment, and this they may well have done. Polybius writes that, along with restoring the Punic captives, the Romans 'from this time on readily and generously gave ear to each of their [the Carthaginians'] requests'. Apart from the instructions to Italian traders, though, his examples involve not Carthaginian requests but later Roman refusals of rebel appeals. By implication, then, there were requests which he thinks unnecessary

² Italian traders arrested: Pol. 1.83.6–7, 3.28.3; Chapter 9 n. 24. Romans responded to merchants' appeals: thus in 229 they intervened, to the point of war, across the Adriatic because the Illyrian kingdom tolerated piracy against Italian shipping (Pol. 2.4.7–9, 2.8.1–13; cf. W.V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford 1979) 65, 195–7). Schwarte (1993) 134–6, 145, and Gómez (1996) 299–300, insist implausibly that the traders from the start had the Roman state's backing; rightly contested by Ameling (2001) 119, but he by contrast seems to think the episode a fiction (120–22).

Romans' immediate concessions: Pol. 1.83.8–10, 3.28.3–4; Val. Max. 5.1.1 and Eutrop. 2.27 (2,743 freed PoWs; the number perhaps via Livy from an earlier source). Gómez, 300–2, quite unwarrantedly supposes that a fresh treaty, formally incorporating the concessions, was struck. On the lurid later anti-Punic propaganda about the traders' affair, notably in Appian, see Hoyos (1998) 125, 136–7; below, n. 5, and Chapter 24.

to detail. Deferment of the indemnity until the rebellion was over was an obvious one to make.³

The friendly settlement of the traders' affair occurred early in the rebellion. Polybius dates the dispute merely 'at the beginning', but once time is allowed for 500 arrests (not very many of which can have been made over the winter) and the Romans' reaction, the settlement can be put no earlier than mid-year. By now Hamilcar must have left the city but, as just noted, the returned ex-prisoners would be an important addition to its garrison. Some at least could also be the nucleus for fresh forces. These were being readied, just as Hamilcar's had been, for the Carthaginians were able to put growing numbers into the field as time passed.

Hiero of Syracuse was another goodwill practitioner. Polybius says nothing about Syracusan merchants being arrested but, if they were, it did not stall the king's readiness to help: 'Hiero always throughout the present war gave great attention to every request' from the Carthaginians. Small as it was after Hiero's peace with the Romans in 263, the Syracusan kingdom was prosperous and skilfully run. Hiero's tax system for agriculture was so efficient that the Romans later applied it to all of Sicily. As with the Romans, what he was asked for can be reasonably inferred—mercenaries, armour and arms, footwear and garments, foodstuffs, perhaps cavalry horses. It would be interesting to know whether such goods were supplied as gifts, on credit or for cash. Perhaps they were a mixture, but Polybius does not say.⁴

Hiero's helpfulness was not altruistic, in the historian's opinion. The king 'intelligently and sensibly' realised that 'it was in his interest, both for his power in Sicily and for his friendship with the Romans, that it should not be entirely possible for strong powers to achieve their intended purpose with no effort.' This is plainly a view Polybius himself held. Arguing with a hegemon, Macedon or Rome, over recognised rights was common enough in his time, whereas Hiero had no known trouble like this with the Romans. But plainly again Polybius sees Hiero

³ Romans allowed hiring Italian mercenaries: App. *Sic.* 2.10; Zon. 8.17.9; Hoyos (1998) 124–5, also suggesting possible deferral of the 10-year indemnity. In one story, Hamilcar claimed in 231 there was still indemnity to be paid; but even if not apocryphal, the item is no evidence that 231 was its final year (Dio, *fig.* 48; Hoyos, 147–9). On further financial matters see below, Chapter 17.

⁴ 'Hiero always' (&c.), Pol. 1.83.2–3, my translation; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.146, and (1972) 167, on the remark. The *lex Hieronica* tax system: J. Carcopino, *La Loi de Hiéron et les Romains* (Paris 1914); H. Berve, *König Hieron II* (München 1959) 67–70.

sharing the view that a balance of great powers was desirable. This is an inference neither difficult nor improbable, though he may well have found it (or a more diplomatically worded version of it) actually stated in a persuasive source, Syracusan or Sicilian. If the king feared that the collapse of Carthage would be followed by anarchy in North Africa—meaning refugees, piracy, social and military chaos and foreign interventions—it is no surprise that the Romans, too, judged it essential to succour the Carthaginians.

Appian and Zonaras go further: they report the Romans sending envoys to Africa to mediate, though without success. But this is only a later propaganda-story. Polybius does not mention it, despite his interest in the diplomatic relations between the two states. Nor does Livy in any surviving context, even though—to look no further than the speeches he lavishes on Romans and Carthaginians in Hannibal's time—he had plenty of opportunity. The item could have served, after all, either as a sample of Punic ingratitude towards the Romans or, from a Carthaginian's viewpoint, of Roman meddling in affairs not their own. Besides this, Appian and Zonaras contradict each other over the context. In Appian the failed mediation follows the Roman concessions and is then followed by the rebels' offer, refused, to hand over their towns to the Romans. The Byzantine writer Zonaras, who for this period epitomises the third-century A.D. Roman historian Cassius Dio, dates it before the Romans' concessions to the Carthaginians. Clearly it is a propaganda piece looking for a home. The tale probably originated from knowledge of the Roman embassy which liberated the traders, plus an imaginative wish to have the Romans play some symbolically praiseworthy part in the great African revolt.⁵

It was now sometime in summer 240. The republic's fortunes were improving. Its remaining sizeable overseas possession, Sardinia with its productive plains, coastlands and mines, would also be sending over supplies and revenues as spring turned into summer. The island's protective garrison was a worry, though, consisting as it did of other mercenaries: no doubt the usual mix, Greeks, Campanians, Ligurians

⁵ 'Intelligently and sensibly', *φρονίμως καὶ νοῦνεχῶς*, 1.83.3. Alleged Roman mediation effort: App. *Sic.* 2.11, *Lib.* 5.19 (with a quite unrecognisable sketch of the war's events); Zon. 8.17.9; Hoyos (1998) 124–5. In Appian and Zonaras the Romans do not make their concessions due to the embassy's success over the traders, because the traders are already murdered. Their sources, that is, remembered the embassy but found other use for it.

and so on. They had not formed part of the army of Sicily, so had not been involved in the negotiations about arrears, nor had they joined the mutiny though Mathos and Spendius must have sent overtures. This suggests that the Punic authorities took care to transmit their pay more or less regularly, a not too onerous expense if they numbered only a few thousand. But as mainland expenses mounted, it might happen less regularly. The Carthaginians had to cross their fingers and trust in the garrison's continuing loyalty.⁶

With Spendius back at Tunes and the rebel forces between Tunes and Hippacra dispersed, Hamilcar could launch an ambitious operation to undermine the revolt. Polybius does not go on to mention him raising the siege of Utica, but that was part of his opening summary of the campaign and it would certainly make sense. The disrupted and demoralised rebels in the siege-camp had no hope of rescue from their immobile comrades to south or north. Their own leader, Spendius, had abandoned them. They could reckon on being cut off and crushed, or starved out, between Hamilcar's forces and the dogged defenders in the town. For all they knew, fresh troops might be sent round from Carthage to complete their ruin. So if Hamilcar followed up his victory by marching the 15 kilometres north towards them, some might try to make it to Mathos outside Hippacra, risking entrapment by Hanno the Great instead if he was in the area. Many, though, must have been recent Libyan volunteers, as the disorderly rebel performance in the battle suggests, and might think they had had enough of rebelling. For some of these, their home towns lay not too many days' journey away. To others Hamilcar might offer a welcome: previous deserters, we have seen, already formed part of his army.

Utica was thus freed from its protracted siege. Trade and nearby farming could pick up again. All the same its situation continued to be insecure. Hamilcar moved away and we do not know where Hanno was (nor probably did the Uticans, sometimes). Foraging squads from Mathos' army, wandering bands of rebels or plain brigands must have continued to pose risks outside the walls. Even inside, pro-rebel sentiments smouldered on, even if hidden from the town's authorities. At

⁶ Garrisons in Sardinia: Pol. 1.79.1–7; Loreto (1995) 192 considers but plausibly rejects the possibility that Libyans troops were included. Punic territory there (coasts, plains, valleys): Gsell, 2.312–13; Huss (1985) 64–5; C. Tronchetti, *I Sardi: Traffici, relazioni, ideologie nella Sardegna antica* (Milano 1988) 94–111; Lancel (1992) 100–1, 104–5.

Hippacra there was no respite at all, even though Mathos had no way of forcing the siege to a successful completion.

Hamilcar's next reported move was to campaign through the hinterland. 'Marching through the rest of the country he won over some [towns], but most he took by force,' thus giving heart to his fellow-citizens, writes Polybius: an irritatingly generalised report, just like the second stage of Hanno's earlier actions. The best that can be done, again, is to weigh probabilities. The heartlands of Punic Libya were the territories around the Bagradas and its southern tributary now called the Siliana, and to their east the river Mellane, which flows into the gulf of Tunis. Agriculture extended inland beyond Sicca and Mactar. With summer arriving or arrived, the heartlands' produce would resupply the rebels if the Carthaginians did not interfere. These regions too, from the gulf of Tunis inland, were Libya's most populous. The more of them Hamilcar could win back or overawe, the more he would cut back Mathos' and Spendius' manpower as well as supplies and funds.⁷

Yet his limited forces meant limited options. He met, and doubtless knew he would meet, much resistance. Most of his captures would require force. Yet even if he was reinforced before marching inland, he could not afford to garrison captured towns. Nor could he gather up supplies to send off in convoys to Carthage. The course of his campaign indicates that it was not his aim to convoy supplies himself, either. He aimed most probably to lower enthusiasm for the rebellion by showing that its sole strategy—blockading Carthage—was going nowhere, and win over or else terrorise Libyan communities. The more widely he could do this, the more confusion, even paralysis, he would spread across Libya.

It was risky strategy. Once away from the coast, Hamilcar could not expect help from Carthage if he got into trouble. He knew that the rebels would not let him march unhindered through the inland, and may have learned (certainly he had to expect) that they were seeking help from the Numidian tribes, old antagonists of Punic power. Numidian strength lay in their tough and versatile cavalry. This may explain the hint in Polybius that Hamilcar took some reinforcements

⁷ 'Marching through the rest of the country': Pol. 1.76.10. On no evidence Gómez (2001) 55–6 disbelieves him—Hamilcar, he supposes, really aimed to advance on Tunes. On the 'little Mesopotamia' between the Mejerda, Siliana and Mellane, 20–100 kilometres west and south-west of Carthage, one of the most densely cultivated areas of the Mediterranean world: Lancel (1992) 290–4.

before setting out. For when Autaritus and Spendius set out in pursuit, Mathos advised them to keep to the foothills 'because of the number of the enemy's cavalry and elephants'. At the battle of the Bagradas Hamilcar, we have seen, had perhaps a thousand citizen horse as well as his 70 elephants. It looks as though he now obtained more horse, perhaps more elephants too, and also more infantry.⁸

These reinforcements may have come from Carthage via Utica or via the gulf of Hammamet, depending on where Hamilcar moved. There is other evidence that the authorities in Carthage were continuing to raise and train forces, as we shall see, and it is a commonsense inference anyway. Allied communities, like those in Byzacium, sent some troops to the republic's armies (as later evidence shows), and they most likely went via the city too. Elephants most probably came from Hanno the Great. With a static or sluggish enemy to watch outside Hippacra, Hanno had little use for all his beasts; he could detach a number of them for his colleague's use.

From the environs of Utica Hamilcar might strike directly inland along the Bagradas valley and neighbouring districts, or conceivably cross the river to sweep round south-east of Tunes and then inland. The notion that he kept within 30 or 40 kilometres of Tunes throughout is eminently unconvincing, though one suggestion has been that he would not venture to leave Carthage exposed and endanger his own communications. But this scarcely fits Polybius' report of him marching through 'the rest of the country', winning over some towns and taking 'most' or 'very many' by force. Besides, first Hanno and then Hamilcar himself had earlier left Carthage well behind, with no reported reaction from its rebel blockaders. It looks as though the Carthaginians had taken the enemy's measure (from deserters, no doubt).⁹

Judging from the events that followed, Polybius' just-quoted report seems a résumé of Hamilcar's operations not just until rebel forces came to grips with him, but also after the battle that resulted. Hamil-

⁸ Mathos' advice to Autaritus and Spendius: Pol. 1.77.1–2.

⁹ Allied troops in Punic armies: Pol. 1.81.4. Hamilcar's march inland, 76.10; 'the rest of the country', τὴν δὲ λοιπὴν χώραν, and 'most' or 'very many' towns, πλείστας; but no place-names are given. De Sanctis, 3.1.378 n. 19, places the towns on the left bank of the lower Bagradas because he thinks the operations were still about liberating Utica and Hippacra; so too Walbank, *Comm.* 1.143; Pédech (1969) 122 n. 2, 129 n. 1. Meltzer, 2.378–9, suggests Hamilcar recrossed to the right bank but does not speculate beyond that. On the crossings of the lower Bagradas see Chapter 9 n. 13.

car plainly got quite some distance from the coast. Not only did the pursuers from Tunes succeed in blocking his path, but so did the new forces coming from two other directions, Libyans and Numidians. This implies a locale somewhere inland, which fits Polybius' account. The lower Bagradas flowed through farmlands and past towns like Thuburbo Minus, Membressa and Tichilla (Testour). South-west of Tichilla, in turn, in the uplands between the rivers Bagradas and Siliana, lay notable cities like Thignica, Thugga, Thubursicu, Uchi Maius and Musti. To their west were important places like Bulla, Thuburnica, Simitthu and Sicca; to their east, between the Siliana and the Mellane rivers, centres included Bisica, Avitta and Thuburbo Maius. The area is extensive and varied, but not enormous: all these regions together, and including the northern coastlands, are about the same size as Sicily, and even Sicca lay closer to Carthage than Lilybaeum to Syracuse.

Wherever Hamilcar went beyond the level plains just south-west of Tunes, he had hills or mountains on one side or both. The Bagradas-Mejerda flows past the southern edges of the *Monts de la Mejerda* (or *Kroumirie Mountains*), which extend to the sea eastward and northward in a series of long ranges. West of Testour, the *Téboursouk* range forms the southern side of the Bagradas valley as far as the *Muthul-Mellègue* river, with the mountains of Algeria beyond. Over to the east, the Mellane river has the *Zaghouan* range for its eastern boundary. Between these main ranges lie lower lines of hills, with all systems running south-west to north-east. This explains how Spendius and Autaritus could shadow the Carthaginians along higher ground and harass them whenever they were on difficult terrain. The tactics are strikingly like those in Italy of a later adversary of Carthage, the dictator Fabius in 217, in his cautious campaign through Campania and Apulia against Hamilcar's son. And like Fabius again, they came close to success.¹⁰

Spendius seems to have been in overall command but with Autaritus as a near-equal. Polybius has Mathos give advice about keeping to

¹⁰ On the northern Tunisian interior; cf. Veith's description ((1912) 500): well-watered but militarily difficult mountain country north of the Bagradas/Mejerda ('*schwieriges Durchzugland*'), and south of the river 'a great number of small chains, ridges and mountain massifs, almost all of which stand more or less isolated or are only loosely connected via low hill-country'. Much of this region was well populated and productive: cf. n. 7 above and, further west, the complex of towns—including Thugga, Uchi Maius, Musti and Thubursicu—between the Siliana and middle Bagradas.

the foothills to 'Autaritus and Spendius' (in that order), then reports Spendius drawing 6,000 troops 'from all the nationalities' at Tunes, and, 'along with the aforesaid men', Autaritus and his 2,000 Gauls. The two leaders cooperated smoothly but the way Autaritus is singled out implies he had a special, not a merely subordinate, position. That Spendius' men were 'from all the nationalities' marks them out as belonging to the old army of Sicily—the foreign and Libyan veterans. Rebel numbers and indiscipline at the battle of the Bagradas suggest, as mentioned earlier, that many or most in that battle were recent recruits. The rebel high command—Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus, in other words—decided to pursue Hamilcar with veterans, men he himself had once commanded. It was a guarantee against rash acts, though it might also mean missed chances. Eight thousand might seem too few for the job, especially as the cavalry contingent can have been only some hundreds strong. But they were virtually half the army of Sicily, after six or more months of war and so many deaths, desertions and defeats. Nor did the rebels expect to operate solely with this force. By the time Spendius and Autaritus set out, friendly answers to Mathos' appeals may have begun arriving, and the pursuers could concert plans with the gathering forces of fresh Libyan recruits and horsemen from Numidia.¹¹

Polybius' narrative-structure repays study. He records, first, the aftermath of Hamilcar's victory at the Bagradas—bridge taken, surviving garrison fleeing to Tunes, and Hamilcar's successful march inland which restored a measure of morale to the Carthaginians. Only then does the focus switch to the rebels: Mathos' advice to Autaritus and Spendius, his appeals to the Libyans and Numidians for reinforcements, and Spendius' and Autaritus' departure. This may suggest that some time passed between Hamilcar's moves and the rebels' pursuit. Moreover Spendius and Autaritus, before leaving Tunes, had been communicating with Mathos, outside Hippacra: something hard to do while Hamilcar's army held the country in between. Only after he left could the three generals re-establish firm contact, though it still entailed some risk if

¹¹ Spendius' forces: Pol. 1.77.4 (6,000 ἀφ' ἑκάστου τῶν γενῶν plus Autaritus and his Gallic 2,000). The size of this pursuit force prompts some scholars, unnecessarily, to see Polybius' report of numbers at the Bagradas battle as exaggerated (de Sanctis, 3.1.377 n. 17; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.142; cf. Huss (1985) 259 n. 58). Mathos' appeals: Pol. 1.77.3; cf. Chapter 12 n. 4.

Hanno and his troops continued in the area. In turn, Mathos' appeals (by letter or messenger) to his countrymen and the Numidians, and the contacts afterwards between these and Spendius in the field, also needed time. So too did organising the pursuit forces, particularly as this could not safely be done until morale had been restored at Tunes. To withdraw a large proportion of the veterans, the backbone of the Tunes army, soon after a defeat would have left the Libyan recruits, at least, in a poor psychological state to confront the reinvigorated defenders of Carthage.

All this gave Hamilcar time to begin campaigning inland, operations—especially the storming of towns—that would have been much harder, or impossible, if even 8,000 of the enemy were already in close pursuit. But as already noted, he met resistance. More places resisted than defected. Support for the rebellion, in other words, was still strong. This would also affect his access to supplies; for much or most of the time, his army would have to live off plunder. The towns he won over or stormed at this stage could not be many before Spendius and Autaritus caught up with him. On the other hand, they followed Mathos' precepts, 'keeping close to the Carthaginians along the foothills'. Polybius does not mention them launching hit-and-run attacks, but these were not needed. They were waiting on the promised reinforcements.

Hamilcar too may have learned of these, but he was in no position to frighten the newcomers off or pounce on them separately. The uneven terrain surely made any such attempt too risky, for one thing. For another, he would not know their whereabouts until they were fairly near. Once Spendius and Autaritus began shadowing him, the safest course was to suspend other activities, keep to fairly level ground and try to entice his pursuers into a wrong move before their reinforcements arrived—for instance a surprise attack, which would allow him to unleash his elephants.

We next find him encamped 'on a plain entirely surrounded by mountains', with the forces from Tunes, the new Libyan forces and the Numidians counter-encamped nearby: Spendius and Autaritus on his flank, the new Libyan units in his front and the Numidian horse in his rear. In other words the enemy held three separate positions and, since Polybius later reports the first two 'coming down to the plain' to give battle, those camps were on the heights. Almost certainly, so was the Numidian camp, for it would have been perilous for them to face an entire Punic army—elephants included—by themselves on level

ground. How long Hamilcar had been there Polybius does not say. It may have been an overnight camp; if so, the sudden rendezvous of three separate enemy forces around him was a triumph of Spendius' (or Mathos') strategic organisation. Just as likely or rather more so, Hamilcar had occupied a chosen position for some days hoping for a wrong move by Spendius and Autaritus before the new Libyan contingents and the Numidians could arrive. Instead and suddenly, as Polybius stresses, he found that not only they were in position above him: so were the new forces.

Polybius' description allows other deductions. Hamilcar had plainly been advancing east or south-east: this explains the Numidians (coming from the west) being in his rear and the rebels from Tunes on his flank. Nor was his plain very broad. Had it been, his foes would have been widely separated on their various heights—or very thinly spread out across them—and that would have given him a chance to escape to safer ground, or even to strike overwhelmingly at one division before the others could come over to help. The plain was certainly large enough for a battle, but the forces involved were relatively small: 10–15,000 with Hamilcar, 8,000 with Spendius and Autaritus, 2,000 or so Numidians, and Libyan troops who can hardly have been above 10–15,000 strong. By way of comparison, the battlefield of Waterloo, where over 140,000 men fought, is about 7 kilometres long and 4 wide.¹²

Vague again, Polybius gives no hint of where they all were. Modern views, as mentioned above, favour ground not far from Tunes: for instance near ancient Nepheris, thirty kilometres or so to the east, at the foot of the 795-metres-high Jebel Ressay and near modern Grombalia; or a few kilometres west of Tunes, amid hills by the right bank of the lower Bagradas; or somewhere between Utica and Hippacra. If any of these are correct, then either Hamilcar's successes up till then are seriously exaggerated by Polybius (and many scholars think they are) or, more charitably, perhaps the Punic army was returning to the coast after its expedition. But if Spendius, Autaritus and the reinforcements

¹² Pol. 1.77.6–7; 'suddenly', ἀφνιδίον. Loreto (1995) 154, in contrast, thinks Hamilcar had been on the march but now decided to undertake 'una guerra di posizione' in face of the three armies—a choice judged 'singolare'—instead of assailing them separately. This view infers that Hamilcar chose to be cornered by all three, rather than being unexpectedly confronted by them. But since he escaped disaster only through Naravas' defection, it is very implausible that he had so chosen. Dimensions of field of Waterloo: D.G. Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York, 1993), 481–2.

did box in Hamilcar within a day's or two days' march from Tunes, why did no extra help come from rebel headquarters, at latest after the Numidians defected? Why did Hanno the Great not leave off watching Mathos (or whatever else he was doing) to aid his colleague in such a crisis, for example by threatening the enemy's rear?¹³

More likely the confrontation took place well inland. For instance, along the middle reaches of the river Mellane, about 15 kilometres north-west of Ziqua (Zaghouan) and about 40 south-west of Tunes, a small plain about 15 kilometres wide in all directions lies around ancient Siminga (modern Saminjah), with high ground on three sides—including the Zaghouan range to the south-east—and a narrow corridor to the north. The site of Thuburbo Maius is on uplands a few kilometres south-west. If this were the locale, Hamilcar could have been making for the region between the lower Mellane and lower Bagradas, called the *pagus Zeugei* in Roman times, after operating further west. Again, farther inland, north and west of Thugga and Thubursicu between the lower Bagradas and the Siliana, lie tracts of lower ground overlooked by various heights: for instance, a small plain between ancient Uchi Maius, some 22 kilometres west of Thugga, and Aptuca further west. The plain, with the modern town of Souk al Jamaa, is about ten kilometres long from north to south, and four wide; it debouches on the north into the broad lands where the Bagradas and the Muthul rivers meet around Jendouba, and on its other sides stand broad uplands and heights.

These examples show at least the range of possibilities for the site. In each of them, the lower ground is small enough in extent to be closely monitored from surrounding uplands, which in turn offer room for three distinct, but not widely separated, bodies of troops. It was obviously a serious risk for Hamilcar to try concentrating an attack on one body,

¹³ Veith (1912) 539–41 (cf. Gsell, 3.112 n. 3) holds that Hamilcar could not move far from Tunes and Carthage, so locates the confrontation to their east, between Nepheris and modern Grombalia, at a site called Khanguet-el-Hajaj (uncritically followed by Barceló (2004) 51). Loreto rightly rejects this to infer a locale 'relativamente lontano dalla città' (viz. Tunes); yet places it among the low hills and plains just east of the Bagradas, only 10–15 km. west of Tunes on the other side of the salt-marsh Sebket Sijoumi (1995) 153 and n. 24; 228 Map 2). He argues that terrain broad enough for elephants and cavalry can otherwise be found only farther south. All this is implausible or at best debatable, as is locating it in the immediate hinterland of Utica and Hip-pacra (so De Sanctis and others): see n. 9.

for the others could converge on his flank and rear. If he divided his forces so as to hold off any such counterblow, he risked piecemeal defeat. Whether trying to outmanoeuvre Spendius, or outmanoeuvred by Spendius, the Carthaginian general had got himself trapped.¹⁴

¹⁴ For the terrain in these (and other, similar) places see *Barrington Atlas*, Map 32. On the *pagi* in Carthage's hinterland, called Muxsi, Zeugei, Gorza(?), Gunzuzi and Tusca, see Manfredi (2003) 421–30, 432–4, 441–7 (the evidence, as usual, is largely post-146).

CHAPTER TWELVE

‘THE LIBYANS’

Mathos’ call to the Libyan communities for fresh forces, and their obviously prompt response, illustrate the Libyans’ commitment to the war. The troops they sent must have come from communities not subdued by Hamilcar in his victorious march, or had set out for Tunes before he reached their home districts. To persist in supporting the cause, even after his riverside victory and intimidating progress through their countryside, shows that they and their home communities were more determined—and more hardened—than the over-enthusiastic volunteers of some months before.

As noted earlier, there was much more for the rebellious towns and districts to do besides sending troops to fight and supplies to sustain them. A level of law and order had to be kept going across Libya, not only to make sending troops and supplies possible but also for communications and trade—whatever trade there still was—between the towns and districts themselves. Even with local levies and, perhaps, detachments of soldiers it must often have been hard to enforce security. Not all the troops sent off to the fronts need have been keen volunteers, and even some volunteers could lose spirit after hardship or defeat. There would be desertions. Banditry and plunder would attract others, too, as a way to extract profits from disorder. Even if the early months of the rebellion left the Libyan hinterland relatively untouched (for the known hostilities were all near the coast), Hamilcar’s operations inland could not help but change that.

For the Libyan communities to maintain the war-effort, some minimum of cooperative organisation and unified direction was vital. The direction may well have come from Mathos, general of the Libyans specifically but also the only rebel leader who seems to have had a wider rôle. His comparatively quiet sector outside Hippacra gave him the time to use his administrative abilities. Still, a great deal had to be left to the local communities. That they kept up their efforts over three years of exacting and often bitter warfare is a testimony to their hard work as well as their devotion.

The only non-Polybian evidence for any kind of organisation among the Libyans is the varied coinage already mentioned, including some

overstrikes on Carthaginian coins, and turning up in both North Africa and Sicily. Along with portraits of deities, the coins bear the Greek word ΛΙΒΥΩΝ, 'of the Libyans'—mostly on their reverse—and are generally seen as struck by the rebels. The identification is not absolutely certain. Another, more recent theory judges them minted for the Punic forces operating in Sicily between 214 and 211. All the same this later dating would make the ethnic term 'of the Libyans' hard to account for. It is not likely to mean the troops to whom the coins were paid; earlier Punic military coinage used the phrases 'the army' and 'the people of the army'—and the later troops in Sicily, like any Punic army, included others besides Libyans. That coins 'of the Libyans' have sometimes been found in late third-century Sicilian hoards is not proof they were minted then. Conceivably they had been accepted and kept in circulation by the economical Punic authorities; or been obtained, and then buried for safe-keeping, by Sicilians who had done business with the rebels. Claimed resemblances between Syracusan issues of 214–211 and some of these coins may not persuade everyone, either.¹

Likelihood then, though not certainty, links this coinage to the rebellion. 'Of the Libyans' as a term matches the possessive forms used by many coin-issuing states until Roman times: third-century examples include 'of the Syracusans', 'of the Sicilians' and 'of the Romans'. If so it is virtually the only tangible evidence for a self-conscious Libyan identity. But there is no sign of a state, or of a confederation with some central institutions, like the contemporary Achaean and Aetolian leagues in Greece. At most 'the Libyans' amounted to a military association, and the only detectable sign of central direction was Mathos' messages from the front.²

¹ ΛΙΒΥΩΝ coinage: E.S. Robinson, *Numismatic Chronicle* 3 (1943) 1–13; Carradice & La Nièce (1988); Huss (1988); Acquaro (1989, 1999); G. Manganaro, 'Darici in Sicilia e le emissioni auree delle poleis siceliote e di Cartagine nel V–III sec. a.C.', *Revue des Études Anciennes* 91 (1989) 299–317; Manganaro (1992); Loreto (1995) 97–101, 110–12; cf. L.I. Manfredi (1999) 74–6. Manganaro, who permits virtually no contact between Sicily and the rebels ((1992) 97), sees ΛΙΒΥΩΝ coin-types portraying Zeus and Heracles as based 'senza alcun dubbio' on Sicilian types of 214–211 (98–9); for sound criticisms of aspects of his thesis, Loreto, 97 n. 52, while Carradice & La Nièce (1988) give numismatic reasons for dating the coinage to the revolt. Earlier Punic coin-legends, 'the army' and 'the people of the army' etc. (*mhnt* [= *machanai*], '*m mhnt* etc.): Huss (1985) 492–3; Mildenberg (1989) 6, 8.

² 'Of the Syracusans' (ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ); de Sensi Sestito (1971) 526–8. 'Of the Sicilians' (ΣΙΚΕΛΙΩΤΑΝ, *circa* 214–211); Manganaro (1992) 99. 'Of the Romans': J.C. Kent, *Roman Coins* (London 1978) 9–11, 265.

There is one other, uncertain clue that the coinage was essentially military. Several particular types show on their reverse an initial or two initials: *M*, *A* and occasionally *Ζ*, mostly in Punic lettering (*mem*, *aleph* and *zayin*), but with a Greek *M* on one issue. Interpretations of these vary widely. One view, for instance, sees the letters as initials of ethnic groupings or places in Libya; or *mem* abbreviates *mamlakot*, 'state', or *machanat*, 'army' (of the Libyans), as do earlier Carthaginian mintings for military pay; or it signifies Mathos himself as supreme leader, with the other two letters merely mint-marks; or that the initials signify Mathos, Autaritus and the least prominent leader Zarzas—with Spendius mysteriously left out.³

This last explanation is the most plausible. The ethnic-initial theory cannot account for why just three places or communities should be singled out, or why some coins bear both *M* and *A*. Again, focussing on one initial as referring to 'state' or 'army', while relegating the other two to a technical rôle, faces an obvious objection—the striking coincidence that the chosen marks should happen to match the initials of three of the rebel commanders. The absence of an *S*, for Spendius, can be tentatively accounted for, in turn. He was the commander most often out on campaign: first against Hanno, then pursuing and entrapping Hamilcar, and still later pursuing him yet again. When he returned to the coast he was usually with Mathos, either outside Hippacra and along with Autaritus, or afterwards at Tunes. And when Mathos, the effective director of the war-effort, was at Tunes—surely the rebel mint's location—newly-struck coins 'of the Libyans' would show his initial. But while he was besieging Hippacra, and Spendius was on campaign against Hanno, the local commander at Tunes (it was suggested above) may well have been Autaritus. This could explain the initial *A* on some issues. Interestingly, though, it occurs mostly on coins which also carry an *M*—to guarantee, maybe, that Mathos had authorised them too.

³ *M*, *A* and *Ζ* as ethnic initials: Manganaro (1992) 96 dismisses the notion. *Mamlakot*: Manganaro, 96 n. 18, tentatively; but '*mamlakot* ΛΙΒΥΩΝ' (supposedly '(moneta) dello stato di Libyes') is an incongruous language-mixture, to say the least. *Machanat* (cf. n. 1): Carradice & La Nièce (1988) 50; Acquaro (1989) 138–40. For *mem* and Greek *M*= Mathos but *A* and *Ζ* as intermittent 'contrassegni di zecca', or the *aleph* perhaps a badly-done *mem*, see Loreto (1995) 112 n. 141. Loreto is also tempted (111 n. 137) by the thought of a play on words, *M* standing for both Mathos and *mamlakot* (*à la* Louis XIV?). Initials of the three generals: Huss (1988), explaining Spendius' non-appearance by his supposed lack of factional support ('Hausmacht').

The initial Ζ is much rarer, does not appear with a companion Μ, and on some of its coins the 'Libyans' legend does not appear. A broad context for these features exists. Though Zarzas possibly was a veteran from Sicilian days, he appears in the story only much later. Two years into the war, he had become a leading figure. Occasionally, he may have been put in charge of coining while the three senior generals were preoccupied, for instance with besieging Carthage itself. By now the rebel coinage would be well-known in Libya and among foreign traders. An Μ to accompany the Ζ might not be needed—or maybe, as a Libyan leader himself, Zarzas asserted a right to issue some coins under his own 'name'. Otherwise, though, Mathos was clearly the chief authority. And when Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas all departed (never to return), he was the only authority.

The Greek word ΛΙΒΥΩΝ on the coinage implies foreign recipients as well as domestic ones. Greek coins were no doubt so well known in North Africa (as Carthaginian coins' own types regularly show) that the word was recognisable to locals. In turn, its form as well as the accompanying Hellenised coin-types presumably made the rebel issues more acceptable to traders. The coins were thus suitable for both local dealings and foreign purchases. Keeping foreign traders happy was all the more vital because the Carthaginians patrolled the coasts, a severe deterrent.

The rebel movement thus identified itself as 'the Libyans'. This cannot be taken as a sign that the mercenaries of the old army of Sicily were just contract employees, as has been suggested. That notion's implausibility was shown earlier. But to strike coins that took turns at mentioning every nationality in the army—even supposing this idea occurred to anyone—would have caused needless confusion, maybe irritation too (how much mention would the small but important Balearic contingent qualify for?). No more useful, and just as unlikely to be wanted, was the nondescript label 'of the mercenaries', *misthophoron*. Besides, this would inevitably have been taken as the mercenaries claiming to be a separate political entity, something for which there is no evidence at all; or, at the very least, to being the providers of any such coins. In reality, of course, the mercenaries—both the old divisions and any newcomers—were not providing the coinage but being paid it.

Among the Libyans themselves, no evidence exists of unified or shared institutions. There is only the report of the oaths they swore to one another at the outset of the rebellion, and these no more imply a unified state or federation than the oaths sworn by the Greeks against

Xerxes in 480. Taxes, local government and district security doubtless stayed with the individual communities. And even if there were tentative moves or calls for closer union, they would be set back badly by Hamilcar's disruptive sweeps through the countryside, punishing some places and winning back others. Polybius' account, brief as it is, does not suggest any structures for mutual support or joint defence: towns and districts faced the Carthaginian forces one by one, and opposition in the field came only from the rebel forces sent out from Tunes. Even after he had left a region, tensions may have lingered between centres that had surrendered and those that had resisted, as well as within some individual communities—pro-Carthaginian versus pro-rebel factions. Once the revolt began to falter, these tensions could only worsen. Finally, after the main rebel army suffered annihilation at The Saw, around the middle of 238, support for the revolt largely collapsed. Whatever experiment 'the Libyans' may have represented, it was undeveloped, very basic, and limited largely to supporting the rebel armies whose bases lay in the neighbourhood of Carthage.

The Libyan Mathos seems to have ranked as first among equals in military command, and as planner and coordinator of the war-effort. It was his tactical advice—Polybius does not term it an order—that the other two followed in pursuing Hamilcar, and it was Mathos, from the siege-camp outside Hippacra, who sent urgent appeals to the Libyan communities and the Numidians for fresh forces in the cause of freedom. This was due partly, perhaps, to force of personality, and certainly to his being leader of the largest body of rebels, which gave him a direct bond with their home communities. But field operations were presumably not his forte, as we noticed earlier. These he left to Spendius and their Gallic confrère, an arrangement that had its advantages—but not solely advantages.

Mathos' position as effective war-leader has occasionally been seen as something more. This was an age when, in the Greek world, successful and manipulative generals could turn themselves into kings. Hiero of Syracuse was a living exemplar, and before him Agathocles whose invasion of North Africa around 310 had cost the Carthaginians so dearly. All three of the great eastern thrones, Macedon's, the Seleucid empire's and Egypt's, were held by descendants of Alexander the Great's generals. The Punic republic itself had had similar experiences, beginning three centuries earlier with the temporary supremacy of one general, Malchus, and the century or more of mastery by another, Mago, and Mago's descendants. Other aristocrats' attempts to seize

power had occurred, like the earlier Hanno's, with the latest as recent as Agathocles' time. Mathos had no lack of models.

What links he had with families of influence and wealth in the Libyan communities we do not know. Polybius' report of him having been a 'fellow-soldier' in Sicily, and as appealing to both the Numidians and Libyans to send help in the name of freedom, does not imply high social origin or unquestioned military powers. Of course it might be argued that Polybius chooses deliberately disparaging vocabulary and that what he represents as begging letters were really peremptory despatches. Yet any propaganda advantage from depicting the leaders as having to plead for help would be slight—in fact would contradict and thus weaken his otherwise consistent picture of Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus as decisive if double-dyed villains, in manipulative control of every situation till near the end.⁴

All the same, there is no sign that he held any practical extra powers above his confrères, and no evidence at all for any regal ambitions. To suppose that his goal (open or hidden) was to establish a Hellenistic-style charismatic monarchy in Libya can only be a fancy. Of course Mathos may have literally dreamt of himself as a king; but very probably even his own private, waking hopes flew to no such heights. His talents lay in organisation and planning. Military prowess, even if limited, belonged to Spendius and (more modestly still) Autaritus. In Diodorus' surviving excerpts on the rebellion, in fact, Spendius is the only rebel leader named, until his violent end. Yet Diodorus knows there were other generals: they receive mention as 'the leaders around Spondius' (as he calls him), a sign of his focus on the Campanian. Mathos is named only after he has gone. If he did show any open hankerings for a diadem, it is hard to see why no ancient writer—not even the firmly critical Polybius—picked this up. With Diodorus and others happy to record how slave-rebel leaders in Sicily more than a century later did take the royal title, the lack of any mention of the Libyan aiming for it would be next to inexplicable. It is, in fact, a little surprising that no one accuses him of this even as a propaganda lie. Using it, authors

⁴ Loreto holds 'che scopo di Matho fosse la costruzione di un stato libico a carattere monarchico' (112). Rather more restrainedly, L.I. Manfredi sees 'the various non-Carthaginian ethnic components laying a claim, with a coinage alternative to the official one, to their own autonomy and identity' ((1999) 74). 'Fellow-soldier' (in Greek, 'one of those who had also served') in Sicily: Chapter 7 n. 10. 'Appealing': Pol. 1.77.3 δεόμενος βοηθεῖν σφίσι.

could have made mordant contrasts between freedom promised and tyranny practised.⁵

That paradoxical outcome might, indeed, have come about if the rebellion had succeeded. For victory would have been won, in practice, by the local and foreign troops under Mathos and his fellow-generals. Disputes (for instance over how to deal with the defeated Carthaginians, and with the Numidians) and rivalries—perhaps between major towns, almost certainly between generals—would have erupted; and sooner rather than later. If Mathos had then emerged as a real or virtual king, it would only have been after a Libyan civil war.

⁵ Diodorus on 'Spondius' and the other leaders: 25.3.1 οἱ περὶ τὸν Σπόνδιον ἡγεμόνες (twice). οἱ περὶ τὸν... is the standard Greek way of referring to the leader of a war-council; cf. Pelling (1988) 137, on Plut. *Ant.* 9.3; for some exceptions see Chapter 21 n. 14. Mathos mentioned: Diod. 25.5.2.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ENTER NARAVAS

Hamilcar's position on the encircled plain was potentially catastrophic. His strength may have been well over 10,000, perhaps as high as 15,000, but the enemy numbered 20,000 or more, as we have seen and as their losses in the ensuing battle confirm if Polybius records them correctly. Spendius launched no assaults against the Punic camp. It was doubtless well sited and well fortified: six years in Sicily had made Hamilcar a master of position-warfare. But even if well-watered too, hunger could be used against it. Hamilcar faced 'a great dilemma and one difficult to get out of': he must either risk a battle or starve.¹

What happened next, Polybius implies, came virtually out of the blue. One of the Numidian leaders, maybe their chief, was a young nobleman named Naravas, commanding no fewer than 2,000 horsemen. This looks like the entire Numidian force, for afterwards Spendius is reported giving battle only with his own and Autaritus' men and the new Libyan division. Not only were there long-standing links with Carthage in Naravas' family, but he himself had a strong admiration for Hamilcar. He now came up to the Punic camp, sought and was given a personal interview with the general, and then brought over his entire contingent.

What interests Polybius, as usual, are the moral and psychological features of the event and their practical expression. The young prince's arrival is vividly told: 'thinking that this was a favourable opportunity for meeting Hamilcar and introducing himself, he rode up to the camp escorted by about a hundred Numidians. Coming close to the palisade

¹ Rebel losses: 10,000 dead and 4,000 captured (Pol. 1.78.12); Loreto (1995) 156 suspects exaggeration, but see below, n. 7. Naravas' 2,000 defectors mean that at the absolute minimum the triple army initially numbered 16,000, but since Polybius does not report it being annihilated, we may infer that some of its troops got away along with its generals. 'A great dilemma': Pol. 1.77.7 (μεγάλην ἀπορίαν). Loreto, 153, thinks that Hamilcar's discomfiture was camouflaged ('mimetizzato') by Polybius' source, whose vagueness about the locale, in contrast with the precise naming of Gorza earlier, 'non è senza significato'. Actually, Gorza if anything is the exception that proves the rule (cf. also Chapter 24).

he remained there quite fearlessly making signals with his hand', and the astonished Hamilcar 'sent out a horseman to meet him'. Then, as the general hesitated at his request for a parley, Naravas dismounted, left his horse and weapons with his attendants and walked unarmed and fearless into the Punic camp and into the midst of its amazed troops. His frank, open and enthusiastic attitude, we read, completely won over the Punic leader. Not only did Hamilcar accept his offer of aid but he promised on oath that, if the young man remained loyal, he would marry Hamilcar's daughter.²

This is striking and even romantic narrative. The basic facts may well go back to an eyewitness, but they do raise questions. What did Naravas, a cavalryman, find so superlatively admirable in Hamilcar, who had made his name outside Africa as a commander in static positions? The recent battle at the Bagradas had certainly involved skilful use of cavalry, but did it take just one battle to earn Naravas' esteem? In any case, if he did feel so warmly towards Hamilcar and if (as Polybius says) he and his family held an ancestral goodwill towards Carthage, why was he sent—or agree to go—to help the rebels? Again, after his very public overture to Hamilcar, how was he able to perform his and his men's defection without anyone trying to stop him?³

Polybius may have judged such matters too complicated for his narrative. Numidian affairs hardly interest him until the time of Masinissa, the country's unifier and long-lived ruler (from 203 to 149) whom he himself was to meet. Nor is any other writer a help. But it is worth noting that the call for troops had come from Mathos. Libyans and Numidians were neighbours and, just as close links including marriage could exist between Numidians and Carthaginians, there would be similar or even closer ones between them and Libyans. Mathos may well have based his appeal on these links. Moreover some, or many, Numidian peoples at this time had bad memories of dealings with the Carthaginians. The Roman invasion of North Africa in 256–255 had sparked a rising in eastern Numidia against Punic hegemony, only for the Romans to be defeated and the revolt firmly repressed. Hanno's

² Spendius giving battle after the defection: Pol. 1.78.10. 'Thinking that this was a favourable opportunity': 78.2–9 (Loeb tr.). Naravas' background: Loreto, 154–5; Storm (2001) 23; Hoyos (2003) 226. On Hamilcar's family at this time cf. Hoyos (2003) 21–2, 223. Walter (1947) 242–3 sees a homosexual rapport between general and prince, an unattested and gratuitous notion.

³ Ancestral goodwill: 1.78.2.

recent extension of Punic control to Theveste and maybe Sicca was fresh intrusion into Numidian lands. These experiences suggest how Mathos could claim that fighting for freedom should involve Numidians as much as Libyans.⁴

This does not explain, though, Naravas' participation if he and his family had remained pro-Carthaginian. When he did change sides, 2,000 men followed him: this reveals him as an important lord, or the son of one. Something more is known about him outside Polybius' account, for he seems to be the Numidian notable *Nrw̄t* (Narawat) whom a Punic-language inscription mentions over a century later. In 128 or 127 a high-born Numidian regional governor set it up near Mactar, in territory once Carthaginian but by then part of the kingdom expanded by Masinissa. In the governor's commemorative list of ancestors, his great-grandfather is *Nrw̄t*, son of *ʒllsn*. A Zilalsan is known from another Punic-language inscription, from Thugga, datable to 138 and naming him as father of King Gaia (*Gjj*), who at some date became ruler over all the Massyli of eastern Numidia, and whose own son was Masinissa. From Livy we know that another brother of Gaia's, Oezalces, briefly followed Gaia as king around 206. Naravas very likely was their brother.⁵

In the Thugga inscription Gaia and Masinissa are termed kings, Zilalsan only 'sufete'. Thugga too was part of Punic Africa until annexed by Masinissa, and it is implausible that Zilalsan had earlier held a sufetship there or elsewhere in Punic domains. Rather, the term seems to indicate that he had been a leader of some kind, but not at the same royal level as his son and grandson, and so the inscriber used a borrowed Punic word for his position. This fits the evidence that Gaia was the first to rule over all the Massyli. Zilalsan, then, seems the lord or prince of one Massylian clan or district. Whether he or Naravas himself was the lord in 240 remains unclear, and also why such a

⁴ Numidians vs Carthage in and after 256: Huss (1985) 235, 237, 240; Storm (2001) 24–5. Theveste: Chapter 3.

⁵ *Nrw̄t*: G.C. Picard, 'L'administration territoriale de Carthage', in *Mélanges offerts à André Piganiol* (Paris, 166) vol. 3, 1257–65; Hoyos (2003) 226. Loreto, 154 n. 28, sees the alleged impromptu nature of the defection as due to a 'fonte barcida', and the details of the interview as merely "pezzo di colore". Gómez (2001) 54–5 similarly sees a pr-Barcid source at work, and Naravas really defecting out of self-interest; he does not explain why the entrapped Carthaginians should seem more enticing than their entrappers. Elsewhere ((1996) 298 n. 89) Gómez doubts the significance of Naravas' cavalry in ensuing operations.

family, with Carthaginian links, would fight on what for them was the wrong side. Perhaps other Massylian clans—aggrieved at the events since 255—had accepted Mathos’ call, making it hard for Naravas’ to refuse. Another reason could be well be mercenary: Mathos surely combined his appeal for cavalry not just with freedom-calls but with funds, or at any rate promises of funds.

This leaves Naravas’ defection still to be explained. What he saw of the rebel troops, and of the turbulent countryside he had ridden through, might not impress him. Yet he could see, too, the size of the rebel forces compared with Hamilcar’s, not to mention the fix Hamilcar had got into; changing sides might bring about his own destruction. Believably enough, then, what decided him were the family’s ties with Carthage and his own esteem for the endangered general. How the esteem had arisen can only be guessed, but some third-century Numidian lords had contacts with Punic culture and notables, as they did in the second century. Intermarriages occurred: a granddaughter of Hamilcar’s was one day to marry Gaia’s and Naravas’ brother Oezalces, and another aristocratic Carthaginian lady, the famous Sophoniba, would marry the Masaesylian (west Numidian) king Syphax. If Appian can be believed, Masinissa—born around this time—was later educated at Carthage, no doubt fulfilling a dual rôle as hostage and protégé. Naravas may well have had a similar experience. Hamilcar, in turn, had visited Carthage more than once during his years in Sicily: his fame, and maybe direct personal contact, would impress a youthful hostage.⁶

Hamilcar did not know whether that might now make a difference. He mistrusted Naravas’ first demand for an interview, plainly wary of treachery from the Numidian’s large escort. But when the prince put himself into his power, the general’s relief was shown by his prompt offer to make Naravas his son-in-law. Naturally this was qualified: it would happen if the prince kept faith. But the offer was shrewd and showed Hamilcar’s ability to judge men. Naravas cannot have expected to be welcomed as overwhelmingly as this, and it certainly made him Hamilcar’s committed lieutenant from then on. It must equally have

⁶ Punicised Numidian architecture: F. Rakob, ‘Numidische Königsarchitektur in Nordafrika’, in Horn and Rüter (1979) 119–71; Lancel (1992) 326–30; S. Raven, *Rome in Africa* (3rd edn.: London 1993) 14–15; Storm (2001) 177–87. Royal and other inscriptions in Numidia, like those of *Wblh* and *ʒllsn*, are in Punic. Masinissa (born ca. 240) educated at Carthage: App. *Lib.* 10.37. Hamilcar’s probable visits to Carthage: Hoyos (2003) 14, 223.

impressed the Numidians as a whole, for when 2,000 followed Naravas into Hamilcar's camp the rebels seem to have been left without any Numidian cavalry, and in the battle that followed Naravas' horse played a decisive rôle. If the two thousand were only part of the whole Numidian contingent, their defection may have convinced other lords that this was not an affair for them after all, and they should return home rather than have Numidians fighting Numidians. If any did stay with the rebels, they were not numerous enough for Polybius to mention. Spendius was left with his own and the new Libyan cavalry, no match for his opponent's.

Hamilcar should now have had at least 3,000 cavalry, maybe more. He marched out of camp and deployed for battle. Thereupon Spendius 'joined together with the Libyans, came down onto the plain and attacked the Carthaginians'. The rebel general, seconded by Autaritus, presumably felt he had no choice. The Libyan reinforcements' morale, and his own men's, must have been affected by Naravas' defection. Spendius decided to unite them for an all-out attack. It at least gave him the advantage of initiative. An all-out attack, though, was one thing; combining his forces to do it was another—and arguably was a mistake. Had the rebels launched attacks from two directions at once, they would have forced Hamilcar to face two ways and lessened his striking power. With luck or deft manoeuvring, they might have thrown part of his forces into disorder, reducing for instance the effectiveness of his elephants or prompting his new Numidian allies to waver. Spendius' decision to combine forces was no doubt due, partly anyway, to the Libyan reinforcements' inexperience. A two-pronged attack, from his and their separate camps, risked them acting too soon or too late. Remembering how his battle at the Bagrahas had fallen apart would only strengthen his view. Terrain might be another factor; Polybius mentions no river or other features, but as we have seen these operations were not being held in a desert. Hamilcar had surely sited his camp in the most favourable position he could, and if obstacles protected the Carthaginians on one or more sides, a divided assault would have been difficult or impossible.⁷

But in the battle the rebels were comprehensively defeated. As the earlier events at the Bagrahas had shown, Spendius' strategic talent was not matched by tactical skills. How he lost we do not know. Polybius

⁷ 'Joined together (ἐπὶ ταῦτό) with the Libyans' &c.: Pol. 1.78.10.

reports only that he attacked the Carthaginians, the battle was hard, the elephants' rôle important, and Naravas performed brilliant feats. One feat was probably to rout the remaining rebel cavalry. While Naravas thrashed these, Hamilcar could take on the infantry with his own, and with the elephants. Spendius had launched the attack in hope, no doubt, that élan would make up for a lack of sophisticated manoeuvre. But if it was checked, he would have trouble regaining the initiative in the midst of fighting; indeed, holding his disparate army together would be a problem. Plainly Hamilcar did check the attack. He must then have counterattacked, with his elephants playing the important part that Polybius mentions.

The rebels did not collapse forthwith, all the same, as they had at the Bagradas. Instead they fought hard, producing a much tougher struggle than in that earlier battle. Against such resistance, the elephant corps' sterling work must have been to wear them down, maybe break up their cohesion by repeated charges, and force gaps in their ranks that the Punic infantry could exploit. At some point Naravas' riders, if they did chase off Spendius' horse, could then charge the rebel infantry or, at any rate, could take up the pursuit when these finally cracked.

Polybius' figures for rebel losses, 10,000 dead and 4,000 captured, have been judged excessive, like his figures for the Bagradas victory. Obviously there is no way of checking. Though the disproportion of slain to captured might seem dubious, Hannibal was to inflict similar losses in more than one well-recorded battle—victories which, like this one, yet did not mean the end of the war. Polybius' figures if correct imply a shattering defeat for Spendius and Autaritus. The rebel army, though not annihilated, seemingly disintegrated as a fighting force. Hamilcar must have suffered some losses too. But now he was free to operate as he chose.⁸

Spendius and Autaritus, and no doubt some of their men, got away to the coast. Of the dead, quite a number must have been veterans of

⁸ The battle: 1.78.11–12 (elephants fighting καλῶς, Naravas rendering ἐπιφανεστάτην χρείαν). Casualty figures 'seem exaggerated in the interest of Hamilcar's reputation' (Walbank, *Comm.* 1.143–4); likewise de Sanctis, 3.1.378 n. 20. Loreto (1995) 156 doubts the 10,000 dead and holds that, as the generals got away, most of the Tunes contingent must have escaped too—an unpersuasive deduction. Killed/captured disproportion: most striking at Cannae (30–50,000 Romans killed, on varying estimates; some 10,000 captured); similarly at Trasimene, 15,000 Romans slain, and a few thousand escaped, out of about 25,000: cf. Walbank, 1.419–20, 439–40, 448; A. Goldsworthy, *Cannae* (London, 2001) 154–6, 193–5.

the army of Sicily, and so too some of the prisoners. The proportion of veterans remaining in rebel ranks overall cannot have been large after this. If just half of Spendius' original division from Tunes were killed or captured, then all the veterans still under arms—at Tunes, with Mathos outside Hippacra and with the beaten generals—would total barely 12,000. Nearly half the old army of Sicily was gone.

Besides sweeping away the rebels, Hamilcar was able to recruit some of the prisoners into his own army. He promised to forget their past disloyalty if they re-entered the service of the republic. These, Polybius adds, 'he armed with equipment from the enemy who had fallen'. This is a curious detail. It should be accepted, for Polybius had no reason for inventing it. Why not with their own arms and armour? Victors disarmed all prisoners on their surrender, and Hamilcar could return suitable equipment to those who agreed to serve. The item implies that the rebel dead, or many of them, had better arms and armour than the prisoners, and therefore that most of these were from the newly-arrived Libyan forces and were unimpressively armed. The dead of course included veterans from Tunes, professionally outfitted. This again suggests that of Spendius' veterans some thousands had been killed.⁹

Those captives uninterested in joining his army Hamilcar released, promising similar immunity for past misdeeds so long as they did not take up arms again. He was, in sum, applying a policy of clemency to repentant rebels. This was not completely new. After all, the towns he had won over—even if few so far—had also been pardoned for rebelling while, no doubt, being warned of due penalties if they backslid. Even in those taken by force, wholesale massacres cannot be supposed, if only because that was not the way to encourage others to yield. The generous treatment of the prisoners was obviously meant to encourage more defections and surrenders.¹⁰

⁹ Hamilcar's forgiveness: Polybius records it for the captives he released (78.14); *a fortiori* then he gave it to those willing to serve. 'He armed' &c.: 78.13; literally, 'with the σκύλοι from the enemy' (σκούλοι being equipment taken as spoils from slain foes). Loreto (1995) 157–8 by contrast thinks that the prisoners willing to change sides were mercenaries of the old army, supposing them, like Hellenistic mercenaries in general, 'meno motivati ad una resistenza a oltranza'; he does not account for their equipment. The Libyan prisoners he thinks were sent home; and, just as unpersuasively, infers that captured mercenaries and Libyans were roughly equal in numbers.

¹⁰ Loreto, 158, argues that Hamilcar's terms to his prisoners suggest a formal capitulation by these, hence a complete rebel division must have been cut off; these suppositions are very insubstantial.

It did have a strong propaganda impact. The rebel leaders grew so alarmed that in the end they resorted to vicious atrocities. Yet Hamilcar's mercifulness did not encourage Libya as a whole to submit: not even most of the towns he came to. Without indicating any details of time or place, Polybius shows that campaigning went on (though a winter pause is plausible) and Hamilcar was again to find himself in difficulties. On more than one front, in fact, the war was soon to bring even more dangers on the Carthaginians.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SARDINIA REBELS

It was now autumn or winter 240. Hamilcar's march inland, it was suggested above, had begun during summer. His operations against rebel towns, Spendius' and Autaritus' pursuit, and what followed, should be estimated as taking two or three more months at least. Hamilcar's and Naravas' victory then may be dated sometime between September and November. Much else happened during that time. The sequence of events, and some of the events themselves, have to be worked out from Polybius' typically sparse indications. The essentials, all the same, are secure.¹

Military preparations at Carthage did not stop once Hamilcar's army had left. We saw earlier that he cannot have left the city undefended, and that after his opening victory he seems to have taken on reinforcements for his strike inland. Recruitment, that is, continued, and without a doubt was much easier once the summer sailing season returned. News of the great war in Africa spreading around the Mediterranean would attract many an eager mercenary—most of them to Carthage and her coastal allies, since the republic's fleet was on patrol against aid to the rebels. Even enlarged, Hamilcar's army and Hanno the Great's would together total only about 30,000 men—forces smaller than several Punic field armies in the recent war against the Romans, and still small in the face of tens of thousands of rebels. For both sides it remained vital to build up and maintain effective armies and garrisons. A frightening episode during (it seems) the second half of 240 shows that the Carthaginians were doing this.

The mercenaries holding Sardinia mutinied. They had not done so at the time of the mainland rising, but Polybius now describes them as 'eager to rival Mathos and Spendius'. No doubt these leaders had been

¹ Chronology: Hoyos (2000) 372–3. Schwarte's rigidly *quellenkritisch* thesis (1993), that on Sardinian events Polybius rather unskillfully inserted into his main narrative a compressed account from a different source, is rebutted by Ameling (2001), though he too treats Polybius' text as virtual carbon copy of its source, where this suits his arguments; on such methods of source-analysis, cf. Chapter 24.

sending them exhortations, for anything that added to Carthaginian tribulations had to be encouraged. As noted earlier, the Carthaginians had had to hope that the troops in Sardinia would not be tempted to do just that. But something now pushed the men into discarding their old allegiance as bloodily as the units at Tunes. The simplest explanation would be that their pay and ration-money, *opsonion* and *sitarchia*, had become irregular or even were suspended under financial pressures at Carthage. The costs of the war in the Carthaginians' own heartlands had to outweigh everything else, and made even risky economies necessary.

Yet lack of pay seems not the sole factor. Nor is it convincing that the mercenaries in Sardinia simply found the latest urgings from Africa persuasive. They had not been persuaded earlier; nor would Mathos and Spendius, with their own hands full and an expensive war to finance, have much tangible help—money or troops—to offer. The mutineers' behaviour, after they took up arms, offers clues. Their pogrom of captured Carthaginians points to bad blood between the two groups; to reach such intensity, it must have stretched back a good few years. Again, once they seized control of it, they apparently ruled Sardinia (or its Punic sectors anyway) as lords over the subject population. The early successes of the revolt in Africa, followed by Hanno's tepid campaign around Utica and the Carthaginians' necessary preoccupation with the mainland, conceivably tempted the men to think they had an excellent chance of striking out successfully for themselves. The Campanians at Entella and the Mamertines at Messana had mastered one city each; here was a huge island ready for the taking.²

Polybius' account is thin. First, 'the area officer commanding them at the time, Bostar, they shut up in the citadel with his fellow-citizens and killed.' Bostar is termed a *boetharchos*, a Greek term not otherwise found in Punic contexts until a century later, when it denotes a military officer in charge of territory. He must have been the military governor of the island and commander of the mercenaries. The unnamed citadel

² Huss (1985) 261, and Ameling (2001) 125, similarly see the mutineers as aiming to set up a 'Söldner-Republik'; Ameling discounts any pay-discontent. Loreto (1995) 191–2 thinks that Mathos and Spendius directly instigated the mutiny in Sardinia, to weaken the Carthaginians further, and hired the mutineers there in contract to 'the Libyans'. But against the notion of even the old army of Sicily being hired by the mainland rebels see above, Chapter 8 at n. 4. The fury of the mutineers in Sardinia outdid anything by the mainland chiefs up to that time: it suggests there were other reasons, even if exhortations did come from Tunes.

could be one of several. For instance the strongly-fortified Tharros on the west coast, one of the island's leading Punic cities if not the chief one; or perhaps Sulci on a small isle off the south-west coast; or Carales, today's Cagliari on the south coast. The most attractive possibility, though, is the powerful Punic-era fortress (its ancient name unknown) at Monte Sirai, on the mainland 15 kilometres north of Sulci and an advanced bastion for that town, but not itself a town. Polybius not only writes of Bostar and his fellow-citizens being shut up in 'the citadel' but later records the mercenaries taking over 'the towns' (not 'the other towns'). His account, compressed as it is, should reflect details more fully explained by his source or sources for these events. Monte Sirai dominated a broad and fertile region from its 200-metre-high ridge. It was not itself a town but certainly was a citadel.³

On a plausible reconstruction, when the mercenaries attending the governor—thus, no doubt, the largest single mercenary body in Sardinia—mutinied, not only Bostar with maybe a few loyal officers and men, but a number of Carthaginian citizens retreated into the nearby citadel. Polybius may mean only Carthaginian officers but he specifies 'citizens'. For able-bodied civilians to take part in a defence is not unparalleled. When in 112 Masinissa's descendant Jugurtha attacked his cousin and Numidian fellow-king at Cirta (modern Constantine in Algeria), Italian traders there joined in the resistance, paying with their lives after Cirta capitulated. This was the fate of Bostar's helpers and Bostar himself when their refuge fell. Whatever its fortifications, famine, fear or false promises could get round them. Alternatively the mutineers stormed the place; but Polybius' account does not suggest serious fighting.⁴

³ Bostar 'with his fellow-citizens': Pol. 1.79.2, βοήθαρχον Βόσταρον... μετὰ τῶν ἐαυτοῦ πολιτῶν. *Boetharchos*: App. *Lib.* 68.306, 71.318–319, 74.341 (in the 150s B.C.); Huss (1985) 471, 479; Wollner (1987) 91–2, 157, 161–2; the Punic term is unknown. Loreto, 192 n. 9, sees Bostar not as military governor but only as the commander of Sardinia's chief garrison. On Tharros, cf. Moscati (1986) 289–318; F. Barreca in Barnett and Mendleson (1987) 21–9; Markoe (2000) 87, 178. Sulci (or Sulcis): Moscati, 240–62; Markoe, 87. Huss, 261 n. 71, views Sulci as Bostar's stronghold because it had once figured briefly in the war with Rome, while Meltzer, 2.380, prefers Carales; Ameling (2001) 126 n. 75 is undecided between these, Cornus, and Nora. On the site of Monte Sirai: Moscati (1986) 263–82 (with plan, 265); P. Bartoloni, *Monte Sirai* (Sardegna Archeologica, 10: Sassari, 1989); Aubet (2001) 237–41 on Sulci and Monte Sirai.

⁴ Huss (1985) 260 n. 70 thinks the 'citizens' were Carthaginian soldiers, but this is not compelling. Italian *negotiatores* at Cirta: Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 21.2, 26.1–3; G.M. Paul, *A Historical Commentary on Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum* (Liverpool, 1984) 81, 86–7. Loreto

This coup did not put Sardinia into the mutineers' power right away. Polybius reports them mastering the towns only later. But the destruction of Bostar gave them control over at least the territory round about. Mercenary units elsewhere rallied to them, though (to judge from Polybius' evidence) without being able to take over any towns. Carthaginian and Libyphoenician residents, then, maybe joined by some Punicised native Sardinians, kept a grip on these and sent desperate appeals over to Carthage. These events happened 'around the same time' as Hamilcar's and Naravas' victory and its aftermath, in other words during the summer of 240. This fits the Carthaginians' reaction. They launched an expedition under a general called Hanno (not Hanno the Great) to recover Sardinia. His troops are unlikely to have been taken from Hanno the Great's army, for it was risky to weaken this, but rather from forces which the republic was continuing to build up at Carthage. The upshot shows that the troops sent were mercenaries themselves. Hamilcar's army inland included newly hired professionals too.⁵

The expedition could hardly be huge, given the republic's difficulties, but the troops should have been at least roughly equal in numbers to the mutineers. It would have been pointless to despatch many fewer, while it was surely impracticable to send twice as many with the situation in Libya so volatile. But Hanno's appointment and expedition were organised very quickly, for the mutineers had not yet made themselves masters of the towns by the time he landed, something it was plainly in their interest to do. From the Carthaginian viewpoint speed made sense. A fast counterblow would rescue the towns and residents and pre-empt further mercenary success. The opposite would not only forfeit the resources of Sardinia but hugely hearten Mathos, Spendius and their people.

This Hanno's background and connexions are not known, but he must have been on good political terms with Hanno the Great and Hamilcar to win the appointment. If he was (as has been suggested) the same as a commander in Sardinia active in 258 against the Romans, he was no longer young. Unfortunately he was not inspiring or lucky either. On arriving in Sardinia, his troops saw better prospects with the

(1995) 192–3 and n.14 supposes that Bostar and his company 'devono aver resistito qualche tempo', and Hanno's expedition was meant to rescue them.

⁵ 'Desperate appeals': these must be inferred from their situation, and, as Hanno's expedition shows, the seas were open. 'Around the same time': Pol. 1.79.1.

other side. This clearly shows they were mercenaries themselves—it is hardly believable that Carthaginian citizen troops, even if available, would defect, and Libyan conscripts were virtually unobtainable by the republic (even if they could be trusted). The hapless Hanno was seized—taken ‘by capture’, according to Polybius. This suggests he took to flight, understandably but unsuccessfully, when his men mutinied. He was put painfully to death by crucifixion, probably after his captors joined up with the mutineers. Crucifixion, ironically enough a Punic mode of execution, aimed at publicity. The killing of Hanno announced to everyone in Sardinia what the mutineers old and new thought of Punic leaders and what would be the fate of any other who fell into their power.⁶

This was not the end of slaughter. The mutineers, thus sizeably reinforced, were at last able to take the towns and every Carthaginian they could find. Native Sardinian communities did not rally to help the Carthaginians; if they had, these would surely have been able to hold out at least in some places, for the Sardinians were armed and warlike (as they proved later, when they drove out the mutineers themselves). Possibly the mercenaries persuaded them to hold aloof, some perhaps even to lend their support. If so, it was by making promises which afterwards turned out to be false. Once the Carthaginians in the island came into their power, the mutineers, ‘devising unusual punishments, tortured and killed’ them all. This means the civilians did not suffer crucifixion like Hanno, for, fearful as that was, it scarcely counted as an unusual form of execution in Punic territories. Polybius’ language clearly points to other methods which fortunately he does not describe. The sufferings later inflicted on Gisco and his colleagues at Tunes were no doubt similar. As noted just now, the careful ferocity of the killings suggests ingrained antagonism between the Carthaginian residents and the mercenaries paid to defend them.⁷

⁶ Hanno the same general as in 258: de Sanctis, 3.1.386. On the Hanno of 258: de Sanctis, 3.1.132; Caven (1980) 31; Huss (1985) 232. But the identification is entirely a guess (and cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.144). Taken ‘by capture’: Pol. 1.79.4 ζωγρία. On the publicity effect (and shame) of crucifixion: Hengel (1977) 14–38, 46–50, 86–90; cf. MacMullen (1990) 206, 211, 214–15.

⁷ Attitude of native Sardinians: cf. Ameling (2001) 126, but he discounts any help from them to the mutineers. He also supposes the island’s towns hostile to Punic rule; there is no evidence for this. ‘Devising unusual punishments’ etc.: Pol. 1.79.4. Loreto (1995) 195 thinks some Carthaginian-held centres remained untaken, though there is no evidence.

So visceral an antagonism had not yet been seen in rebel Africa. Of course some killings of civilians may have occurred without Polybius mentioning them, but he would hardly have ignored extensive massacres when one of his crucial themes is the rebels' bestial savagery. Now, though, that savagery would make a fearful appearance on the mainland.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE KILLING OF GISCO

Mathos, Spendius, Autaritus and their war council had plenty on their minds as the events in Sardinia unfolded. They kept in touch with the island mutineers and were delighted by their successes. At the same time they themselves were enduring a conspicuous lack of success in their own war, and the strain was starting to tell.

Polybius' narrative at this stage is even thinner on military details than before. His interest is in the psychological and moral contrasts between the two sides, the 'civilised' (Hamilcar and the Carthaginians) versus the 'barbaric'—which now emerge more tellingly than ever. On these he focuses extensively, leaving the reader to infer that warfare was continuing one way and another. If he were as interested in the actual operations, the picture would be much sharper. The area relationships between the various army groups on both sides, above all, would be clarified. With so many details unstated, only cautious inferences can be drawn from what he and others do report. Clearly the war now slowed to a grind both painful and oddly sectional. In the Libyan heartland, Hamilcar, with Spendius' army gone, was continuing his campaign, winning towns by surrender or assault. As already noted, Polybius' report of him winning these across 'the rest of the country' does not fit solely the period before he was entrapped, and the historian later shows him continuing operations after Mathos and his confrères reacted brutally and bloodily to his clemency policy. For in response he abandoned clemency, both in battle and towards prisoners.

At first, after the victory that Naravas helped him to win, Hamilcar seems to have had no rebel field forces confronting him. Polybius mentions further combats and savage treatment of prisoners only after the rebels' impious atrocities on the coast. Not only that, but Hamilcar's follow-up to the victory earned enough success to worry the rebel generals. This does not mean that he won over large areas permanently. As we have seen, some places did not change sides or surrender readily, and some that did surely acted out of calculation, not enthusiasm. Hamilcar was strong enough to capture places, but not to impose a permanent occupation or remain in one district indefinitely.

Some places may have come under the control of their revived pro-Carthaginian factions and so stayed loyal after he had gone, but others surely looked for the first chance to revert to rebellion. Other areas no doubt remained outside the reach of his army. His strategy, then, was inherently risky, whatever successes he gained.

Eventually, too, he had to go into winter quarters. Feeding both men and horses between October and February was always problematic and, reliant as he was on Naravas' cavalry, Hamilcar needed to take special care of the horses. It is even possible that he and Naravas retired to coastal Byzacium, where the weather would be mildest and communications with Carthage safer.¹

The other sector of war was, of course, the coastlands around Carthage. Not much was happening there militarily, so far as we can tell. The rebels holding Tunes and its environs continued to blockade Carthage with little effect. The siege of Hippacra wore on, locked it seems in equal stalemate. Even though the besieged were hard pressed after a year's blockade, they still held out. Mathos, last heard of outside Hippacra, was now rejoined by Spendius and Autaritus, still more implacable for war after their defeat. They met at the camp outside Hippacra, for some while afterwards Spendius and Autaritus in an army-assembly announced the arrival of a letter from Tunes. But Mathos does not appear in the grim events that his confrères then prompted. Maybe he stood back to let the foreign generals incur the odium; or he returned meanwhile to Tunes to take charge there, leaving them outside Hippacra but keeping touch in the carefully orchestrated scenario that ensued.²

On the Carthaginian side, Hanno the Great's movements are the biggest blank. That he continued to command an army is shown by Hamilcar's later call to him to combine their forces. We have seen

¹ Climate in Tunisia: Mensching (1968) 18–48; winter temperatures inland (sometimes falling below 0° C), *ibid.* 27–8; cf. also Chapter 21 n. 3.

² Spendius and Autaritus rejoining Mathos: clearly implied by Pol. 1.79.8. So too Huss (1985) 261; Loreto (1995) 156; despite Veith (1912) 543 n. 1, and similarly Walbank, *Comm.* 1.144. In camp: 80.11 (τοῦ χάρακος). That Hippacra was no longer under siege (Meltzer, 2.381) is hardly likely, and that the army assembly was held at some third place (Walbank, *ibid.*; cf. Loreto, 156 n. 42, who suggests 'il campo di Utica') is even less plausible. Mathos' whereabouts: after 1.79.8 he is next shown forming the siege of Carthage with Spendius (82.11), but of course it does not follow that both went from Hippacra to Tunes together. Mathos' presence beside his colleagues cannot always be assumed: thus the later expedition against Hamilcar at first seems to include him (84.1–3), but this turns out not so (86.2–6, etc.).

that it is unlikely he and his men were shut up in the city all this time. Not long after, during the massacres by the rebels, he certainly was somewhere in the field with some freedom of movement, for eventually he was able to take his army inland. But he was making as minor an impact on the rebels as they were on him and Carthage. He may have been content just to cover Utica, or he may even have crossed over to Cape Bon and northern Byzacium to protect them from rebel raiding. Certainly the enemy concentrations at Tunes and Hippacra could communicate fairly readily with each other. The most striking sign of this is how Gisco and his companions were at some stage transferred from prison at Tunes to the encampment outside Hippacra.³

There was nevertheless a measure of skill, or else luck, in the Carthaginian dispositions along the coastlands. The rebel concentrations around Tunes and Hippacra were balanced by the Punic defences of Carthage and the army of Hanno. Nor did the rebels combine their coastal armies against Hanno, or Carthage, or even Hippacra. It is scarcely possible that doing this never occurred to Mathos and Spendius. More likely they were paralysed by concern that such a move might expose them to a counterstroke—for instance, weakening the forces around Tunes to hit at Hanno might prompt an attack from Carthage against those remaining. Concentrating all their strength against Carthage, with its massive defences, scarcely appealed either, especially if Hanno could harass their rear and, worse, Hamilcar hastened back. Nor was sending off a second major expedition against Hamilcar an agreeable idea. Some units were sent off, but only later, as will be seen.

By now the year 240 must have been giving place to 239. Mathos and his confrères had much to worry about. Not only were their own efforts stagnating, but Hamilcar's acts of clemency threatened to undermine rebel solidarity; and not only in the Libyan heartlands. The rebel armies were uneasy too. Mathos and Spendius' fears were specifically over these: that, 'psychologically affected in such a way [i.e., by Hamilcar's mercy policy], both the Libyans and the bulk of the mercenaries would hurry to accept the guarantee [of pardon] being offered.' Hamilcar was making sure that word of his leniency reached the rebel armies and that it could include them.⁴

³ Hanno in the field: also inferred now by Loreto (1995) 160–1.

⁴ Stagnation of rebel effort: so too Huss (1985) 261. 'Would hurry to accept the guarantee being offered' (ὁρμήσωσι πρὸς τὴν ὑποδεικνυμένην ἀσφαλείαν): Pol. 1.79.8. Leniency offer included the coast armies: plainly implied at 79.11–12, 80.1–2.

This distinction between Libyans and mercenaries can hardly refer to just the two elements of the old army of Sicily, for that would leave out the greatest part of the rebel forces, the Libyans enlisted since the rebellion began. Rather Polybius must use 'Libyans' for these recruits and 'mercenaries' for the old army of Sicily; or else means all the Libyan troops and then the foreign veterans. His careful phrasing adds emphasis to his point. As will be seen, some peace feelers had been put out behind the rebel leaders' backs too. Mathos, Spendius and their colleagues saw the possibility of their entire military strength collapsing, unless they took action.

One way of restoring morale was closed off. Roman generals taking demoralised armies in hand often restored discipline with strict measures: decimating the units, imposing harsh drill and exercises, camping in the open in all weathers. This was, of course, out of the question at Tunes and Hippacra; it would simply have prompted mass desertions or even a coup against the leadership. Another way to rebuild morale can be to launch a successful new campaign. Scipio Africanus was to do so with Roman forces in Spain in 209, taking the Barcid capital New Carthage in a lightning strike. In 1796 and 1797 Napoleon's Italian campaigns would have even more dramatic impact on the floundering French war-effort.

Here again the rebel leaders could not act. Not until later, it seems, did they send out any forces, and these were small and lacked the top commanders. No doubt the leaders had sound reasons. None of them was a good enough general to have high hopes of confronting Hamilcar successfully (they were avoiding even confronting Hanno). Of their soldiers the most experienced and best disciplined were in the thinning ranks of the army of Sicily, who could neither take on Hamilcar by themselves nor be supported reliably by the Libyan recruits. Clearly any recently-hired foreign mercenaries were too few—and maybe too careful of their own skins—to make a difference. Besides, the generals could fear that if another expedition was sent out, many of its troops might change sides.

Military action, then, was impossible. And yet so was inaction. The solution was logical and at the same time savage: Hamilcar had to be deflected into ruthlessness and, at the same time, disenchanted rebels must be intimidated or liquidated. If everyone, in the armies and the hinterland, faced no quarter at Hamilcar's hands, they would be locked into fighting to the end. The leaders fixed on Gisco and his associates, now if not earlier brought from Tunes to the camp outside Hippacra.

Why had they been preserved for so long? We know of no overtures to ransom or exchange them. This suggests hoarding, maybe for the leaders' own security if a débâcle were one day to ensue, or as bargaining counters—for Mathos and Spendius knew that negotiations would eventually be needed—or for both reasons. But now the leaders saw a more pressing use for them.

The entire army had to be made complicit in an unforgivable crime. This explains the careful theatricality of the ensuing events, master-minded—according to Polybius—by Spendius and Autaritus. The first step was to call an army assembly. This was in or outside the camp, as he soon makes clear. It is worth asking what status a meeting there would have in rebel eyes, when just as many troops, or more, were encamped at Tunes 60 kilometres away. One factor was that two generals were present. Very likely so were delegates from Tunes—they could have helped escort Gisco and the other prisoners. Polybius' depiction certainly points to an assembly recognised (by the rebels) as official. Both Spendius and Autaritus made speeches and put proposals to the gathering: proposals that were accepted and acted on at once. Later on, at another meeting, 'they made a decree' about further actions. Polybius uses a technical term for decree-making and his context implies the Hippacra siege-army again, though conceivably this decree may have been ratified afterwards by the Tunes troops. These quasi-legal proceedings, essential to the impact intended by the leaders, lend a surreal air to the deliberately frightful acts that were done.

Spendius opened proceedings. Presumably he had interpreters translating for him, for (as discussed earlier) Polybius emphasizes how Autaritus was the only leader more or less fluent in the army's *lingua franca*, Punic, though by no means all the men understood it. But with the bulk of the army now made up of Libyans, both the surviving veterans of the Roman war and the newer recruits, the Gallic chieftain had an easier task. This was one reason, though doubtless not the only one, why it was left to him to take proceedings to their climax after Spendius made the first moves.⁵

⁵ Generals decided 'to call together an assembly' (συναθροῖσαι τοὺς πολλούς), 79.9. Later on 'they made a decree': 1.81.4 ἐδογματοποίησαν. Autaritus spoke Punic, 'with which the largest number of men were happy' (80.5–7), so could be widely—but not universally—understood at once. On the language problems in the army of Sicily, cf. Chapter 5 n. 7.

First, Spendius produced a man who, he announced, had arrived from Sardinia with a letter from the successful mutineers. It 'told them that they should carefully guard both Gisco and all his associates', because 'some people from the camp were negotiating with the Carthaginians about their safety'. In other words—according to Spendius—the Sardinia mutineers were warning of treachery in the forces outside Hippacra. He then put on a show of accepting the advice from Sardinia, urging his comrades to mistrust Hamilcar's clemency and ensure Gisco's and the others' continuing incarceration, claiming that freeing them would simply earn the Carthaginians' contempt and a freed Gisco would be appointed to a command against the rebels.

This letter of course looks suspicious, as Polybius himself clearly thinks, stressing Spendius' rôle in first introducing it and then playing on it. In particular, how could the mutineers in Sardinia know of nefarious goings-on in rebel ranks in Africa if the rebels themselves did not? If a real plot was afoot there and was detected, the sleuths should have been the generals or their agents. On this interpretation, then, Spendius and his confrères—Autaritus at least—invented both the Sardinia letter and the ensuing one from Tunes. Yet, if an outright trick, it was a clumsy one and risked being seen through. Were Spendius simply inventing treason-accusations, why not just produce a 'turncoat' (or a written 'denunciation') from within the supposed traitors' own ranks? This would have been easy and believable. Again, if he forged the Sardinia despatch, he was taking much trouble over an item that he nevertheless did not expect to have a decisive effect, for it was followed by a second, allegedly from Tunes, reiterating its points. No doubt the dramatic way the despatches were produced added to their impact but, as just noted, the impact could have been equally or better achieved otherwise.⁶

The fact that the letter from Sardinia urged the rebels to guard Gisco and his associates carefully supports its genuineness, for what Spendius and Autaritus had in mind was quite different. If the letter, and its successor from Tunes, were purely inventions to whip the army up to murder, they would scarcely have been so tepidly penned. Again, to prejudge both as forgeries depends on assuming that the mutineers

⁶ Rebel camp: n. 2. Letter from Sardinia: Pol. 1.80.9–10. A fake: Gsell, 2.114; Pédech (1964) 291, 'une tromperie'; Huss (1985) 261; Schwarte (1993) 117–18; cf. Ameling (2001) 110–11, noting how everything was stage-managed (*inszeniert*). By contrast, Loreto (1995) 158 thinks both letters probably genuine.

in Sardinia could not learn of treachery in mainland ranks unless the mainlanders already knew. This is not a safe supposition. For instance, Spendius and his confrères had not captured a Carthaginian general; the mutineers in Sardinia had. It is safe to infer that the mutineers, who readily crucified Hanno, would have had no qualms about first extracting any potentially useful information from him. Nor need he have been their best informant. The mercenaries who deserted him quite possibly included some who had earlier deserted the mainland rebels for the Carthaginians. Just as Hamilcar's army at the Bagradas had included a number of such deserters, the authorities at Carthage might well suppose it safe to include others in an expedition overseas. Some of these, in their earlier change of sides, might know of (and might even have been messengers for) disenchanted rebels putting out peace-feelers.⁷

It is true that the actions in the army-assembly were carefully dramatised. Just when the generals wanted to wrench the men from any thought of compromise, one message after another arrived urging everyone to be on guard. It is important, though, to make a distinction between what the messages said and how they were announced. The generals already feared that Hamilcar's mildness was having an impact. Polybius implies, and their ensuing actions confirm, that at least some of the men were indeed inclining to thoughts of peace or, at any rate, talks about peace. As just suggested, a few may even have tried making secret contacts with the Carthaginians. But peace-inclined rebels were not liable to publicise their feelings if they were a minority. If the letter from Sardinia was genuine, the leaders found their fears finally confirmed. Not only did contacts exist, at least in the Hippacra army, but (the letter warned) they envisaged a specific goodwill gesture, the freeing of Gisco and his companions. The letter from Tunes may have been genuine too. Reasonably enough, if the mutineers wrote to one camp they would write to the other. For Spendius to defer bringing on this letter until the right psychological moment was predictable theatre.

Real peace-overtures would surely and sensibly envisage starting with Gisco's release. This idea (we shall see) arose in the army besieging Hippacra, not among the Tunes forces, and after the captives had

⁷ Ameling, 110 n. 15, agrees that Hanno might have given the information; but he still inclines to seeing the whole assembly-episode as a carefully stage-managed *Komposition*.

been brought over from Tunes. Soldiers and no doubt some officers disenchanted by the state of affairs, most of them veterans of Sicily as it turned out, saw in Gisco a focus for efforts towards bringing about peace. Of course peace-moves would require other efforts too. The Carthaginians were unlikely to negotiate unless the rebel leadership changed; and the rebel leadership was more than unlikely to entertain negotiating at all. Mathos' and his colleagues' own survival was bound up with an unrelenting prosecution of the war. They owed their position to espousing extremism against compromise, and could not safely back away from it now—or be trusted if they tried. Any move for peace or—even if none—any really serious disenchantment among the troops therefore implied the overthrow of Mathos, Spendius and their confrères.⁸

As already mentioned, Spendius put on a show of accepting the advice from Sardinia. He skated over the obvious point that freeing the captives would happen only as a *quid pro quo* for peace terms—a point implied even in the warning from Sardinia. But Spendius is not likely to have backed up his claims with closely-argued reasons which Polybius suppresses. By openly attacking the idea of freeing Gisco he showed that he feared it could win, or had already won, some support. Even soldiers not inclined to peace may have felt that Hamilcar's clemency should be balanced by a matching rebel act, if only to assure the sceptical outer world that the rebels too were responsible and worth respect—and maybe recognition. To the leadership, by contrast, Gisco and his companions were now a liability, just like those in the army favouring peace. Spendius' aim was to quash any thought of release, and with it any notion of overtures. Peace-sympathisers in his audience could riposte with the obvious point just noted, but the generals were well experienced in quashing ripostes too.

The carefully-devised scenario at the assembly proceeded. While still speaking, Spendius was interrupted by a second messenger, supposedly hotfoot from Tunes, 'giving warnings very similar to those from Sardinia'. As just suggested, the Tunes message had been held back until now for dramatic impact. Certainly it would have strained everyone's credulity to suppose that the peace-plot had been independently discovered in two separate places (Sardinia and Tunes), two separate

⁸ 'Soldiers and no doubt some officers': by contrast Loreto (1995) 158–9 envisages peace-feelers emanating 'solo tra i capi della rivolta'.

messages had been sent from these to Hippacra, and both had arrived more or less together. If Mathos was back in charge at Tunes, this second letter came from him. Was he unaware of what his colleagues in the Hippacra camp intended to do with the captives? More probably he chose not to mention it in writing, even as an addendum. Another possibility too was noted above: that Mathos (wherever he was) was content to let his foreign colleagues put the death-demand, even if he silently agreed with it. For if the war did bring victory in the end, he as leader of the Libyan communities—not Spendius or Autaritus—would have to find ways of getting along with the Carthaginian republic for years to come.⁹

Polybius mentions the Tunes letter and immediately moves on to Autaritus' speech, leaving it to readers to infer that Spendius greeted this supposed sudden confirmation of the plot as vindicating his words. This should not blur the important feature just noted: neither letter urged putting Gisco's group to death—or even rejecting peace as such. They were compatible, for instance, with using the captives as negotiating chips to prise better terms from the Carthaginians than these might wish to offer after Hamilcar's successes. Both Spendius and Autaritus took care to keep this point from becoming obvious. But peace-sympathisers in the ranks were not going to speak out against Spendius: that would only unmask their own feelings and maybe any contacts they had with the Carthaginians—if, for instance, they claimed that there was no danger of these giving a freed Gisco a military command. More, then, was necessary to smoke them out.

This was Autaritus' cue, following Spendius' harangue. The generals' tactic was to build up feelings among their troops by stages—the most effective way to unite them into committing atrocities. Spendius used the two despatches one after the other to start the buildup; Autaritus then brought about the climax. In Polybius' words: 'The only safety, he said, for their cause was to abandon any expectations from the Carthaginians. So long as anyone looked forward to their clemency, it was not possible for such a person to be a true comrade-in-arms.' The troops must trust only the bitterest anti-Carthaginian spokesmen—he did not have to name them—and 'judge those who said the opposite as traitors

⁹ 'Giving warnings': at 79.10 and 14 Polybius uses the same verb, διασαφεῖν, literally 'to clarify', but here plainly 'to warn, advise, tell'; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.144 glossing it as 'to give instructions'.

and enemies.' Thus in Stalinesque style Autaritus went beyond Spendius' urgings, which had at least left open the possibility of the peace-sympathisers simply being misguided comrades. This demonisation confirms the alarming appeal of Hamilcar's well-publicised leniency.

Autaritus moved to the final step. 'He counselled them to torture to death Gisco, those seized with him, and subsequent Carthaginian prisoners.' This contradicted the advice just arrived from outside, for to keep careful watch on prisoners presupposed keeping them alive. Some listeners might have asked for this to be clarified, had they been foolhardy enough. As we saw above, the sequel shows that Polybius' report of the assembly 'unanimously' applauding is exaggerated for effect. But Autaritus' opponents were loath to risk a thrashing or worse. The applause indicated he had carried most of the men with him, as did the way his counsels were immediately acted on. In effect, the acclaim amounted to ratifying these counsels. Maybe indeed Autaritus put them as formal proposals and the army carried them by acclaim: it would be quite in Polybius' manner to leave this to be inferred from what followed. For it is clear that Gisco's and his fellow-captives' execution was agreed to.¹⁰

Of course there is no solid proof that either general did speak in these terms. We have only Polybius' account. There is no control from other sources, and what he gives is a précis at best. Yet the speeches replicate neither each other nor the despatches from Sardinia and Tunes. As his whole narrative of the war shows, Polybius had detailed and indeed eyewitness sources to draw on, however much he selects and compresses their material. Even though he compresses the two generals' words, nothing suggests that he has invented these from thin air.¹¹

The next speakers we hear of protested not against the deaths but the torturing, 'because of Gisco's past kindnesses towards themselves.' This tells us two things. First, as just noted, the acclaim for death was so strong as to inhibit any opponents. But second, there were still some spirits bold enough to urge relative humaneness in inflicting it. Some of them would doubtless have opposed the death penalty had they thought

¹⁰ 'The only safety, he said' (etc.): Pol. 1.80.1–2. 'Unanimously applauding': 80.7.

¹¹ Speeches in Polybius: cf. Pédech (1964) 254–302, esp. 259–76, 291; Walbank (1972) 69 n. 11, and *Comm.* 2.385–6, 397–9; K. Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1981) 79–95, esp. 86–95; C.W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1983) 157–58, cf. 142–68 on speeches in ancient historians generally. On Polybius' sources, see Chapter 24.

it safe. As it was, even their limited moderation brought catastrophe on them. For the generals, moderation of any sort was proof of disloyalty, and those who showed it could be identified—fairly or unfairly—as the false comrades plotting to free Gisco. Polybius, in reporting ‘many men coming forward from each nationality simultaneously’ to speak against torture, allows two more inferences. First, such men belonged, most or all of them, to the army of Sicily and its foreign units; for the Libyan troops recruited in the rebellion had no past acquaintance with Gisco or reason to feel for him. And second, they acted ‘simultaneously’. No doubt they saw that, if they tried to protest one by one, the very first protester would swiftly be silenced. The only way to show their numbers, and prompt timider comrades to back them, was to rise as one. Yet it was largely an on-the-spot reaction to Autaritus’ coldblooded proposal. ‘They were speaking all together, each in his own language’, and so could not be widely understood. Maybe each man sought to appeal to his own fellow-countrymen, who may or may not have been grouped in their separate units. Or maybe all were calling out together, disorganisedly, to the generals to protest about the torture and demand that a vote on it be put.

This played straight into the leaders’ hands. The protests were greeted by the same deadly shout that had struck down earlier opponents of Mathos and Spendius—*balle*, ‘throw!’ The leaders had obviously primed their supporters, one of whom raised the cry. At once a rain of stones, which must have been gathered beforehand, felled the protesters. The stoning went on for some time, if Polybius is right that all were killed. It was left to their friends to pick up and bear away the bodies. This detail too is noteworthy, for it confirms that the murdered men had sympathisers, even if these had been too intimidated to join in speaking out. Whether these in turn were marked down by the leadership for later liquidation we are not told.¹²

Were there peace-sympathisers among the forces at Tunes? It can hardly be doubted, but Polybius does not mention any being sought out

¹² ‘Because of Gisco’s past kindnesses towards them’ (διὰ τὰς γεγεννημένας ἐκ τοῦ Γέσκιωνος εἰς αὐτοὺς εὐεργεσίας): 1.80.8. ‘Many men coming forward from each nationality simultaneously (ἅμα)’: *ibid.*, which incidentally should solve Loreto’s indecision ((1995) 159) about whether Libyans or mercenaries were more numerous. Murder of the protesters: 80.9–10. Loreto (159 n. 58) suspects ‘una duplicazione modellistica’ of the earlier massacre of opponents (1.69.10–13; Chap. 7). But the language in the two accounts is not in fact ‘pressoché identico’, and the success of the *balle* tactic earlier can explain why it was re-used now.

and killed. Tunes peace-sympathisers would have been waiting on the Hippacra initiative. A critical point must be made, all the same. The men murdered outside Hippacra were not peace-sympathisers as such, but those who showed sympathy, however limited, for Gisco's group. This relative humaneness the generals evidently seized on as proof that such men were the ones plotting to free the captives. Killing them neatly excised at least some of the army's lukewarm element, quashed any notion of talks and, just as important, intimidated everyone else who might be sympathetic to peace-moves—or even to changing the leadership in hopes of more competent generals. For the leaders, a broad hunt for peace-sympathisers in either camp, or both, was too risky; a pogrom could have paralysed or even shattered the armies. The vicious but limited bloodletting outside Hippacra served the rebellion and its leaders better.

Killing the alleged traitor-comrades was only the first stage of violence. With the troops aroused by bloodshed and vengefulness, Spendius and Autaritus ordered Gisco, his associates and prisoners taken during the war to be brought outside the camp. There were nearly 700 war-prisoners, a number surprising at first sight, since the rebels had won few victories apart from their early success outside Utica. Still it was a small number for a year or more of warfare, and Polybius gives the impression that there were no such killings at Tunes. If there were, his silence would be peculiar, for they would have reinforced the very themes he soon goes on to discuss—the bestialisation of human beings in a ruthless war and the contrast between orderly civilisation and barbarous incontinence. Most probably, all war-captives had been imprisoned in the Hippacra camp. The reason may be that, at Tunes, they had better prospects of escaping to Carthage nearby.

Under Spendius' direction, all the captives were taken a short way out of the camp. The horrific treatment they then suffered must again have been planned. Polybius' account comes as near to emotion as his matter-of-fact style permits. 'Beginning with Gisco, whom a short time earlier they had chosen from all the Carthaginians, acclaimed as their benefactor and entrusted with the matters in dispute, they cut off their hands. When they had cut their hands off, they amputated the wretched men's other extremities. After maiming them and breaking their legs, they flung them still alive into a ditch.' What happened next he does not say. It would be in keeping with the deliberate viciousness of the murders if Gisco and his hundreds of fellow-prisoners were left in the ditch to die (as Polybius seems to imply) with their bodies then left to

dogs and vultures. That the Carthaginians afterwards appealed, unsuccessfully, for the bodies to be returned does not contradict this—any remains were desirable for proper burial. The desecration would reinforce the impact the generals wanted to make on both their own men and their enemies.¹³

It was this atrocity, and the rebels' ferocious follow-up to it, which for Polybius showed they had become feral animals—the generals most of all. The killings, obviously in full view of the army, flouted every norm of customary behaviour even in warfare. The victims included envoys and past friends; other Punic prisoners too had perhaps served with the rebels in Sicily. They died hideously, and their bodies were denied even minimally decorous burial, because Carthaginians placed as much emphasis on proper burial as Greeks and Romans. Whether Mathos and his allies tried to circulate any justification for these acts we do not know, but probably they did not. They could neither claim provocation by the Carthaginians (quite the opposite) nor confess that the barbarities aimed at sabotaging peace prospects. Equally they had no wish to cover up the acts but, rather, to publicise them. With the killings, Mathos and Spendius may well have thrown away any hope of winning the outside world's recognition of 'the Libyans'. But the choice for themselves had been either savagery or deposition. They did not hesitate.¹⁴

¹³ 'Nearly 700 prisoners': all the captives, Gisco and his associates included, totalled some 700 (Pol. 1.80.11). 'Beginning with Gisco' &c.: 80.11–12 (my translation; for clarity, in the first sentence, I place the main clause after the subordinate ones). The extremities could include not only feet but also genitals, nose and ears (the fate of the goatherd Melanthius in *Odyssey* 22.474–7); compare the mutilation (hands, feet, maybe also eyes) inflicted on the captured Byzantine rebel Thomas the Slav in 824 (A.A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, 1: *La Dynastie d'Amorium* (Bruxelles, 1935) 45 n. 3; cf. W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Recovery, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988) 241–2). On the savagery of some punishments in Roman times, cf. MacMullen (1990) 204–17.

¹⁴ Cf. Huss (1985) 261: 'The leaders had attained their aim: after the massacre... none of the mercenaries and Libyans could any longer toy with the thought of deserting to the Carthaginians' (my translation). Bestialised and morally diseased nature of the rebels, 'and all the more so their leaders': Pol. 1.81.5–11; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.145; Eckstein (1995a) 126–9, 175, 177, 247–8; Champion (2004) 30–63; cf. Chapter 16 n. 5. Carthaginian concern for funeral rites: Gsell, 4.459–61; Lancel (1992) 235–47.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DISASTERS AND DEFECTIONS

Just as the rebel leaders hoped, the massacres at Hippacra re-energised their war. With the temper of the conflict now hugely embittered, talking and any scheming for peace disappeared. They were able to sharpen resistance to Hamilcar in the field, even though they themselves dared not face him directly. As the year 239 advanced, the war-situation would shift in their favour.

Some days after the bloodshed, Carthaginian heralds came to the camp to ask that the bodies be handed over for burial. The heralds came via Tunes under safe conduct or else from Carthage by sea to Hippacra. This response was surely no surprise to the rebel leaders. Heralds, messengers protected by sacred conventions, were at times the only way for warring enemies to communicate. Tellingly, for one side to ask the other to be allowed to gather its dead was a token of humiliation. That the Carthaginians were willing to offer this shows how concerned they were to ensure proper rites for Gisco and his fellow-victims.¹

For Mathos and his confrères, it meant an extra opportunity to heighten the propaganda of frightfulness. They did not harm the heralds—hardly from lingering scruples, but because they wanted to send back a message. They announced that they would receive none in future, nor any envoys. If any did come, they would be handled in the same way as Gisco and his fellows. The gesture, though not

¹ Carthaginian appeal for the bodies: Pol. 1.81.2; Diod. 25.3.1 (largely or entirely from Polybius). La Bua (1966) 237, and Loreto (1995) 104 n. 91, hold that these two accounts are so different in detail that Diodorus cannot be directly using Polybius ('divergenza che conferma la non derivazione del secondo dal primo', as Loreto puts it); in fact the two versions are remarkably close (as La Bua's own quotations show, 237 n. 17). Cf. Hoyos (1999), under 'Sources'. 'Some days later': allowing two days for word to reach the city, at least one for the citizens and authorities to react, and two for the heralds to travel. Heralds: Mosley (1973) 81, 84–9. Polybius writes 'heralds' (κηρύκας), Diodorus 'a herald' (κήρυκα). Normally only one herald was sent on an errand (cf. Mosley, 84–5); King Darius, though, had sent at least two each to Athens and Sparta before 490 (cf. Herodotus 7.133–6). Maybe one herald went to the Hippacra camp and one to Tunes, if Mathos, generally seen as the rebel chief, was there.

the added threat, was a recognised one. To refuse to receive heralds, messengers whose sacred function was universally recognised, was a gesture of defiance, announcing war *à outrance*. Polybius does not point this out, surely because it seemed obvious. The Ten Thousand Greeks marching through the Persian empire in 399 had voted just such a decree—interestingly enough, to prevent enemy agents from trying to corrupt the troops. Some ‘heraldless’ wars did, in reality, continue to have heralds active, but in this one the leadership firmly enforced the ban. In turn, their threat to kill by mutilation was an extra refinement to underline (to their own men as much as to the enemy) their uncompromising defiance. The war, by virtual definition, was indeed now a ‘Truceless War’.²

This pronouncement was, it seems, made by the generals on their own authority. But they followed it up by reconvening the army-assembly to issue the formal threat already mentioned—one intentionally bloodcurdling. ‘They made a decree and exhorted themselves’ to torture and kill all future Carthaginian prisoners in Gisco’s fashion. With captured allies of the Carthaginians, they would cut their hands off and send them to the city in that state. ‘This decision, moreover,’ Polybius states, ‘they persisted in practising carefully.’ The decree’s context, as noted above, is still the army in camp outside Hippacra, but Polybius’ comment shows that it was obeyed by all rebel forces. It must have been ratified by the forces at Tunes—still much the largest body of rebels. Its plain intent was to extend indefinitely the rebellion’s bonding through blood. Carefully obeyed, it was in effect a ritual for reinforcing participants’ complicity in unrelenting war—a ritual of which Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus were the secular priests. Thus the killings and maimings would never stop, nor would Carthaginian retaliation. In this way, at the cost of much suffering, the leaders riveted home their control of the movement. The drama at Hippacra was in effect their second coup against doubters and potential rivals, one no less successful than the first.³

² Herald and envoys banned: 1.81.3; Diod., *ibid.*; cf. Prologue, n. 4. Resolution by the Ten Thousand in 399: Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.3.5, δόγμα ποιήσασθαι τὸν πόλεμον ἀκήρυκτον εἶναι; but they did not firmly keep to this in practice.

³ Rebel decree: 81.4 (‘exhorted themselves’, παρήνεσαν αὐτοῖς); Diod. 25.3.1, ἐνομθέτησαν, ‘legislated’ (sometimes treated as evidence of Diodorus using a different source: cf. Chapter 24).

Polybius implies that news of the events reached Hamilcar and Hanno via Carthage. The republic's heraldic self-humiliation to the rebels was dictated by circumstances. It was not a sign of despair—on the contrary, it fuelled the citizens' will to fight. Even before the heralds were sent to Hippacra, envoys were on their way to both commanders, 'begging them to bring help and avenge the unfortunate men.' Hanno's reaction to the massacre is not stated, but Hamilcar's was eminently satisfactory—from Mathos' and Spendius' point of view. 'Frustrated at his foes' frenzy,' Polybius writes, he saw 'that the sole solution was if he could exterminate the enemy totally'. He now abandoned his clemency policy—henceforth 'when he defeated his foes, he slaughtered those in the field, and those brought in to him as prisoners he threw under his elephants.' This latter was an unusual mode of execution, only practised once, eighty-four years earlier—and not in Africa but at Babylon, when after Alexander's death the regent Perdiccas killed his rival Meleager and had dozens of his supporters trampled to death. Certainly it was not a Punic practice, even though the Carthaginians had used war-elephants for a century. Hamilcar may have read of it, or perhaps it had become an item of mercenary lore that he learned on campaign.

A modern suggestion is that the general turned to a policy of extermination only because public opinion at home demanded it. This is an effort to be kind; in reality, nothing hints at Hamilcar being less angered than the citizens at Carthage by the massacre of their fellow-countrymen. He acted, Polybius writes, because he was 'frustrated at the enemy's frenzy'. In a later stage of the war, we still find him throwing prisoners to their deaths under his elephants. It had become his trademark.⁴

Polybius approves of this reactive cruelty. In a long and, for him, passionate discussion he goes on to compare the rebels' moral state

⁴ Message from Carthage to Hamilcar and Hanno, then heralds to Hippacra: Polybius gives this order of events (1.81.1–2). Hamilcar's retaliation: 1.82.1–2; 'frustrated' seems better for *δυσχερῆστούμενος* and 'frenzy' for *ἀπνοοία*, rather than Shuckburgh's 'alarmed' and 'recklessness', or Paton's 'anxious' and 'desperation'. 'When he defeated the enemy (etc.): 82.2, my translation; Paton's—'meanwhile he continued to put to the sword those of the enemy who were conquered in the field', wrongly implies the no-quarter policy existed already. Hamilcar's 'trademark': see 84.8. Perdiccas' use of elephants in 323: Curtius Rufus, *Historia Alexandri* 10.9.18 (the only source with this detail); Scullard (1974) 78; P. Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1990) 7–8.

now to a disease of malignant and putrefying ulcers, curable only by ruthless excision. Like ulcers, he insists, men with souls cancerous and ulcerated are not helped by forgiveness and humanity, for they see kindness as disguising treachery. Attempts at punishing them they counter with still worse atrocities, until 'they become bestialised and have abandoned their human nature'. Among the mercenaries, he affirms, this degeneration was due partly to ingrained evil character and partly to the depraved leadership of Mathos and his confrères. He may not judge the Libyan troops blameless: the generals had feared desertions among both mercenaries and Libyans. But Polybius may well judge the veterans of the old army, and especially the mercenaries among them, to be most responsible for the atrocities. After all, Spendius had taken the leading rôle, efficiently seconded by his Gallic colleague. In keeping with Polybius' moralising attitude to the war and its psychopathy, his feelings about the atrocities lead him into overly broad generalisations. Yet he himself has given glimpses of a more complex reality, for 'many men from each nationality' had spoken out against torturing the captives. Not all mercenaries and Libyans were as perverse as their leaders, even now.⁵

The slaughter at Hippacra must certainly have had deep psychological impact on the soldiery. They were all now tainted with the stench of impiety, treachery and savagery. They all knew that their actions opened them to fearsome retaliation if the revolt foundered. Polybius' description of them as suffering 'frenzy', or madness, is obviously literary overcolouring, but the vicious treatment of prisoners which they had decreed, and now practised, makes the term understandable. A critic of Hamilcar's, of course, could say the same of him. The level of savagery on both sides had reached a new high.

Since we find Hamilcar, before Hanno's arrival, refusing quarter to rebels in the field—that is, in combat—we may deduce that Mathos and Spendius, having reaffirmed control of the rebellion, sent fresh

⁵ Polybius on the diseased nature of the rebels: 1.81.5–9; Ameling (2000) 113–14; Eckstein (1995a) 119–29, 174–7; Champion (2004) 70–82, 83 n. 51, 88–9, and cf. 241–59. 'They become bestialised': 81.9 ἀποθηριωθέντες, an image foreshadowed in his earlier warning about the risks of employing mercenaries (67.6) and his comment that, to counter Hamilcar's clemency, the generals aimed to 'bestialise' their men against the Carthaginians (ἀποθηριώσειαν, 79.8); adding that disease-ulcers too can 'become bestial' (ἀποθηριοδοῦσθαι, 81.5). Diod. 25.3.1 echoes the image in reporting the generals' ban on heralds: they were ἐπιτείνοντες τὴν ἀποθηριώσιν, 'intensifying the bestiality'. Depraved leadership, along with evil nature and upbringing: 81.10–11.

forces inland to confront him. This would have been in summer 239. With Mathos and his colleagues remaining at Hippacra and Tunes, the field commanders would be lieutenants of theirs. Polybius implies a number of small engagements and skirmishes rather than a major battle, for had Hamilcar fought a third battle, the historian would surely have taken care to report it. The rebels had learned the lesson of the previous ones. The new forces would try to harass his movements and communications, win back towns that had surrendered to him, and encourage others to stay loyal to 'the Libyans'—just as a much larger expedition was to do a year later. This sort of indecisive warfare lent itself to manoeuvres, skirmishes and the occasional attempt at an ambush. It could last weeks or even months.⁶

Hamilcar was in no danger of a defeat, but these operations were a wear and tear on his army. Already he would have suffered casualties when storming recalcitrant towns. Nor can desertions be ruled out, especially after the bloodthirsty decree from Tunes, with every soldier now risking his head or at least his hands if taken prisoner. This would help explain his decision to call on Hanno to join him. Hanno had been making no impact on the coastal rebels, nor been much troubled by them. Hippacra and Utica were being soundly defended. Carthage was well-garrisoned and could continue to obtain food and munitions by sea; in fact, the city was expecting a huge convoy of supplies from the Emporia region. Hamilcar might well believe that uniting the armies 'would sooner put an end to things'. It was an effort to break out of the stalemate of a war on two separate fronts. He might calculate that a united field army could deal decisively with the forces facing it, then capitalise on the success to march on the coast. The rebels there, intimidated by this turn of events plus the ruthless policy of no quarter, would surely have their fragile morale shattered. If all went well, this new strategy would indeed bring an end to the war.

It certainly looked promising at Carthage: 'the Carthaginians supposed they now had more splendid hopes over the war.' Polybius reports these hopes after mentioning Hamilcar's summons to Hanno and his policy of extermination. What authority did Hamilcar have to call Hanno? Hanno's appointment predated his, nor does Polybius report

⁶ Hamilcar simply obeying 'opinione pubblica cartaginese': Loreto (1995) 159. No-quarter policy forced on him by Hanno the Great, supposedly now restored to power: Gómez (1996) 287–9.

the senate or citizen body granting Hamilcar higher status. As noted earlier, they seem to have been functioning as equals, even if Hamilcar by now had the larger army. As will be seen, what followed their junction points, again, to equality in status. Polybius' words are carefully chosen. That the Carthaginians now 'supposed' they had brighter hopes might well be true, but Polybius does not claim that the hopes became reality. And that Hamilcar 'called Hanno to him' does not mean he issued an order. The republic had earlier sent representatives to both, 'begging them to bring help and avenge' Gisco and the other victims. It is plausible that Hamilcar took this, reasonably enough, as a call to unite their armies. For the reasons just set out he judged—more controversially—that Hanno should march to him, rather than vice versa. No doubt he had to inform the authorities at Carthage, and very probably he obtained their approval, willing or hesitant. Hanno then had to comply, whether he liked the proposal or not.⁷

Before setting out, Hanno had to arrange the security of the loyal coastlands, especially as Utica, too, would clearly be menaced again as soon as he left. He placed 500 Carthaginian citizen soldiers at Hippacra and the same number at Utica (or, on a less plausible interpretation, 250 at each), small contingents which make sense only if he reckoned that the towns' own defenders could cope. The Carthaginians' presence would—in theory—ensure the towns' loyalty. Then he set out to join Hamilcar. Once the rendezvous occurred, it raised citizens' hopes at Carthage as Polybius reports. The joint forces must have numbered over 20,000, troops experienced by now in the ways of North African campaigning. Whatever the rebels' field strength, it was at least matched by the united armies and maybe was outnumbered. Operations began anew and Polybius claims that repeated opportunities offered themselves for success against the rebels—only to be stymied by a new setback.⁸

⁷ 'The Carthaginians supposed': Pol. 1.82.3. Hamilcar's invitation to Hanno: 82.1 (but ἐκάλεi, 'called', hardly means he 'begged' him, as Paton translates). Loreto, 160–1, also views the initiative as Hamilcar's; cf. Hoyos (1994) 250. Gómez (1996) 289–90 contrastingly judges the invitation a mere 'suposición' by Polybius' supposed pro-Barcid source, to conceal that Hanno in fact forced Hamilcar to accept him. On Hamilcar's position *vis à vis* Hanno see Chapter 10 n. 1.

⁸ 500 soldiers each at Hippacra and Utica: this seems Polybius' meaning (1.82.10), for he records the later massacre of these men 'and their leader', their bodies being flung 'from the wall' and the inhabitants handing over 'the city' to the rebels, as though the two towns were one. Diodorus (25.3.2) so interprets Polybius, or else clarifies things from other evidence, for he does use plurals. Meltzer, 2.383, and Veith (1912) 543, suppose the 500 were just at Utica, but this hardly convinces; Loreto (1995) 123,

Hamilcar plainly expected the united armies to continue his strategy. The two armies could move together or manoeuvre separately but in concert, to distract, frustrate and entrap enemy forces. This, in turn, implied that Hanno must in practice subordinate his own authority to Hamilcar's. No doubt the senate and magistrates at Carthage had realised this too and, by approving the junction of the armies at Hamilcar's request, given it their agreement. But we should not assume that Hanno equally agreed, especially after seeing the situation for himself. In fact he must have disagreed forcefully.

Polybius does not bother to tell us why they quarrelled. It does not seem due to ingrained personal enmity, for the two generals had collaborated earlier as we have seen. Later too, even when their personal relations were bitter, they would be prepared—under pressure from their fellow-citizens—to coordinate military operations effectively. But this time the campaign was totally undermined. It is reasonable to suppose that the two men quarrelled over how to wage it. Hamilcar, on all evidence, was not tolerant of contradiction or challenge. We have seen his savage response to the savagery of the rebels: they might spare the lives at least of captured allies of Carthage, but he slew Libyan and mercenary prisoners alike. Later in the war, and later still in Spain, he would treat captured enemies with equally provocative harshness. He was stubborn and could be wilful, as his years of command in Sicily, and abrupt resignation, had shown. He saw his strategy as the way to victory. Later, after winning supreme command, he would continue it. For another leader to question it, and maybe try to overturn it, was unacceptable.⁹

Hanno's antagonism need not just have been pique over being treated as a virtual lieutenant. All of Hamilcar's months of campaigning through Libya's valleys and uplands had failed to achieve the main thing, to subvert the rebel effort against Carthage and Hippacra. As noted earlier, he probably could not even keep secure control of places stormed or surrendered. His savage retaliations virtually guaranteed further hostility among the Libyans. Hanno had a right and even a

164, that 250 were at each town but (164 n. 11) under a single commander, which makes poor military sense. Date of the rendezvous: Hoyos (2000) 374–5, proposing the second quarter of 239.

⁹ Pol. 1.82.3–4 (quarrel and its impact). On savage acts by Hamilcar: in Sicily—as it happens, against mutinous mercenaries—see Hoyos (2003) 11; later in the Libyan war, Chapter 18; in Spain, Hoyos (2003) 58 (the chieftain Indortes).

duty to point this out, and to demand a rethink. An alternative strategy would have been to abandon current operations and move their armies against Tunes: the Carthaginians' earlier appeal to both generals, as Polybius reports it, had implied this move. At Tunes the armies could either have forced the main rebel army out to fight, or bottled it up just as it was trying to do to Carthage. A pitched battle, on past form, had good prospects of victory; then, with the main rebel forces smashed, other resistance would surely collapse. Alternatively, blockading the blockaders into surrender was a manoeuvre that Hamilcar himself would later try more than once, including at Tunes. But, as the Carthaginians would find there, the rebels' positions made a blockade a far from sure thing. It went without saying that the outcome of a battle was still less sure. If either move led to serious defeat, that would mean the loss of Libya—maybe of the war. Hamilcar had grounds for sticking to his own strategy.

The quarrel severely hampered operations over quite some time, for the generals 'not only missed opportunities against the enemy but gave their adversaries many openings against themselves.' Generalised though this is, Polybius' remark points to weeks or months of fruitlessness and danger. Having in effect marched to cooperate with Hamilcar, Hanno could not refuse to take any part at all in operations—and if he did, he might find his force dangerously isolated while Hamilcar marched elsewhere. But there was little to stop him cooperating half-heartedly, failing to lend proper support when needed, even striking out in a direction he thought justified and leaving it to Hamilcar to follow, equally half-heartedly. Obviously it could not go on. Besides the danger, their black-comedy wrangling would bring angry criticism at Carthage on both men, undermine their political support and—worst of all—risk joint dismissal in favour of ambitious challengers. Their troops may well have been angry and frustrated, too, not to mention fearful of a potential disaster. Finally the generals agreed to put the problem to the senate and sufetes at Carthage.¹⁰

By now it must have been well into summer. The war was beginning to go badly elsewhere, too. Hanno's departure from the coast left Utica and Hippacra exposed. Carthage's defenders and walls deterred

¹⁰ De Sanctis, 3.1.379 n. 21 sees Hamilcar's strategy as the only feasible one; so too Walbank, *Comm.* 1.145. Lengthy quarrel: similarly Loreto (1995) 161, 163; cf. Hoyos (2000) 374.

assault, but beyond the walls Mathos and his colleagues now had almost complete freedom of movement. The men of Utica and Hippacra, and the few hundred Carthaginian soldiers in their midst, were well outnumbered by their rebel blockaders. The season was unsettled, as the disastrous storm that blew up not long after suggests, and so the two towns could expect less help by sea from Carthage. Feelings at both places began to shift.

The Carthaginian senate and sufetes decided on a radical, in fact unprecedented, solution to the quarrel. The logic of the situation plainly called for one general to be supreme. But, just as logically, it would be pointless to leave him with a subordinate liable to insubordination. They decided that one general should give up his post: in effect restoring the command-situation that had existed before Hanno joined Hamilcar. But they would not or could not decide who should go and who stay. Instead, they directed that the choice be made by the troops. Letting these choose their own commander was novel, though a distant precedent might be cited from the year 383, when the soldiers in Sicily had elected the son of their fallen general to take over. The most plausible explanation is that Hanno and Hamilcar were both too strongly supported by their kinsmen and friends in the senate and other powerful bodies—particularly the tribunal of One Hundred and Four—for the authorities to agree on naming either for recall. Yet a choice had to be made. It paired political sensitivities with military logic to leave it to the men best able to judge.

Hanno and Hamilcar, as noted earlier, as usually seen as old rivals heading respectively an oligarchic and a democratic party. On this view, letting the troops choose was a democratic victory of the citizen-assembly over the oligarchic senate and sufetes. But in reality the two generals had more likely been allies or at least politically cooperative up to now. In any case, nothing suggests that a decision at Carthage was impossible because citizens and senate disagreed. It looks instead as though there was disagreement at every political level. We may also infer that the army's choice was not a foregone conclusion, for otherwise Hanno's friends would scarcely have agreed to let it choose.¹¹

¹¹ Directive from Carthage: Pol. 1.82.5. Himilco son of Mago replacing slain father in 383: Diod. 15.15–16; Polyæn. 5.10.5; Huss (1985) 138–9. Party strife at Carthage: e.g. Meltzer, 2.383; Picard, *Hann.* 72; cf. Lancel (1995) 42. On Hanno's and Hamilcar's political milieu see Chapter 3; on delegating the choice to the army cf. Hoyos (1994) 249–52, 264–6, and Loreto (1995) 161, 204–5 (both sceptical of political strife). Huss,

Polybius' account might suggest that the entire army had a say. So too do his and others' reports of later army votes, in 228 to elect Hamilcar's son-in-law Hasdrubal as his successor in Spain, and in 221 his son Hannibal. Yet in these later decisions it is hard to imagine the African and Spanish conscripts and allied troops in the army, and any foreign mercenaries, being allowed a vote on who should fill the highest military office of the Carthaginian republic. In the same way it is unlikely that, in Hanno's and Hamilcar's united army, allied Libyphoenician units, the deserters from the enemy, newly-recruited mercenaries, and Naravas' Numidian horsemen were all given equal voice with the citizen officers and soldiers. Quite apart from their non-citizen status, they surely outnumbered these. Now and later, 'the army' meant in effect its Carthaginian elements.¹²

In the deteriorating military situation, the exchange of messages between Carthage and the generals must have taken some time. Despatch riders needed armed escorts and, even so, had to take care not to fall into rebels'—or bandits'—clutches. Debate at Carthage, which resulted in a decision simultaneously cautious and bold, would have taken time too. This is matched by Polybius' narrative layout. For, after mentioning the generals' quarrel, its effects and the Carthaginians' directive, he postpones the outcome to insert the catalogue of disasters that now struck. The first happened 'along with' the just-mentioned events; by implication the next two followed—Hippacra and Utica defecting, and Carthage coming under direct siege. Polybius also recalls the loss of Sardinia, an earlier catastrophe but one which took time to be completed. Only then do we learn how the Carthaginian troops had voted. In other words he does not report developments tidily, area by area, but instead implies that the disasters occurred during the long-drawn-out quarrel.¹³

in a footnote (262 n. 82), sees delegating choice as a neat way for 'the ruling faction' to avoid responsibility and claims it 'casts a bright light' on internal politics, but does not clarify. Picard ((1968) 117–20; *LDC* 208) supposes that the citizen assembly, prompted by Hamilcar's son-in-law Bomilcar into a virtual *coup d'état*, defied The Mighty Ones to authorise the army to choose, while Hanno refused to accept dismissal and was later recognised as still general.

¹² Hasdrubal's and Hannibal's elections as generals: Loreto, 165–6, is undecided whether the whole army or just its citizen troops chose; Hoyos (2003) 73–4, 87, 250 n. 2, 254 n. 1, 252, with references to earlier discussions, shows it must have been the citizen troops.

¹³ 1.82.6–11 (disasters ἅμα δὲ τοῖς, 'along with these events [at 82.2–5]'); 82.12–13 (the directive implemented). Cf. Veith (1912) 543–4; de Sanctis, 3.1.380 n. 22; Huss

The first blow was the loss in a storm of the entire supply-fleet from Emporia. Polybius stresses that in these supplies the Carthaginians 'had placed their greatest hopes for their food and other needs'. Land access to the city was of course blocked by Tunes, but munitions would come by sea anyway because of costs. For the same reasons, it follows that they were largely for Carthage—perhaps with some also earmarked for Hippacra and Utica, but not for re-export to the army inland which surely had to live off its surroundings, like Hannibal's a generation later in Italy. The city's population was no doubt swollen by refugees from country areas under rebel control or threat, not to mention by its garrison and their cavalry horses and war-elephants.¹⁴

This may explain why supplies from abroad and from the Cape Bon peninsula were apparently not enough. In any case, through the winter of 240–239, cut off from Libya and with seas unsafe, the Carthaginians will have been on short rations (except maybe the wealthy élite). Other materials too would begin to run short. Even though the great convoy need not have borne the first or last stocks for the city, clearly it was unusually large—a classic case of far too many eggs in one basket. There is no reason to suppose that what hit the convoy was a winter or spring storm. Winter is implausible, because of both the weather conditions and the relative chronology of events. Spring sailing did occur and was risky, but the laden convoy was surely not conveying last year's crops and fruits. The produce must have been recently gathered, and this points to mid-year for the catastrophe. Summer too could unleash fierce weather, as incautious Roman fleets in the recent war had found more than once at horrendous cost. One of history's worst naval tragedies was the all but total wreck of one fleet off the Sicilian

(1985) 262 and n. 82. Loreto, 165, cites 'il ritmo narrativo polibiano' to place the defections of Hippacra and Utica, like de Sanctis and rightly, between the Carthaginians sending out their directive and its outcome, though he does not consider the other disasters. On the reminder about Sardinia, cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.146.

¹⁴ 'Had placed their greatest hopes', 1.82.6 (my translation); not 'on which they entirely relied' (Paton's Loeb transl., my italics), and certainly not Shuckburgh's 'their chief hope of furnishing the army with provisions and other necessities rested upon the supplies that were being brought'. On the costs of sea vs land transport: (e.g.) M. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1973) 126–9; K. Greene, *The Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (London, 1986) 39–40. Loreto, 163 n. 4, sees only Tunes as an obstacle to supplying the armies by land.

coast, with the loss of up to one hundred thousand lives, in July 255: Polybius attests the season.¹⁵

The city was not thrown into starvation by the disaster. It still had access to overseas suppliers, whatever the maritime risks. But hardships obviously continued. Temporarily indeed they may have worsened, for it would take time to organise any relief shipments from Sicily or Italy—and meanwhile the rebels launched a close siege of the city. It is possible, too, that some of the Emporia supplies had been meant for the hard-pressed people of Utica and Hippacra, whose food, too, could come only by water but who had far less means of directly attracting merchant suppliers.

There is one hint in Polybius that conditions were becoming unbearably hard at the towns. At some point, Utica had contacted the Romans with an offer to surrender to them. This must have preceded the towns' defection to the rebels, for these—once in control there—would never have allowed it to be made. Nor could Polybius then have treated the Romans' refusal as an act of kindness towards Carthage, along with their refusal of an appeal from the mutineers in Sardinia. As it is, he stresses that they were honouring the peace treaty of 241, which banned either state from making an alliance with an ally of the other. To the Romans such a surrender, called *deditio*, gave them total power over the surrenderers—and, implicitly, total responsibility. The Mamertines had done it in 264 as a device to win Roman help, and had prospered. The Uticans plainly calculated that, like the Mamertines, they too were offering *deditio* as suppliants, not as a conquered community. Their hope can only have been that the Romans would then take steps to succour them directly, and not just with food but with armed protection.

This looks like a counsel of despair among Utica's ruling group. It seems they had no wish to join the rebellion, yet they had no hopes of aid from Carthage. But the Romans rejected the offer. If the Uticans were still unwilling to take the rebels' side, they had no option but to keep hoping that they would receive help from their kinsmen. The Hippacritans, who made no approach to the Romans, must have been

¹⁵ Loreto, 213, dates the convoy disaster to January or February 239 because these are climatically the worst; for Huss (1985) 262 n. 78 it was the second half of 239, as he dates the preceding loss of Sardinia to this year. For a mid-year date cf. Hoyos (2000) 374–5. Disaster of July 255: Pol. 1.37.4–5 (between the risings of Orion and Sirius, i.e. between the first and last weeks of July); Thiel (1954) 236 n. 569; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.96–7; Morgan (1977) 101; Bleckmann (2002) 170 n. 5; cf. E.J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (rev. edn., London, 1980) 54.

in just as painful straits, to judge from their defection along with Utica afterwards. The best that the Carthaginians could do was to promise a share of the supplies coming from Emporia. If so, the disaster at sea was the last straw. Now these ancient and dogged allies and kinsmen decided to join the rebellion.¹⁶

We saw earlier that there must have been some pro-rebel feeling in both towns. Hippacra and Utica had their own Phoenician heritage and their own links with the Libyans. Some members of their ruling élites would have such links too. Until now pro-rebel temptations had been successfully kept in check; but the new setbacks to Carthaginian prospects released them. Polybius writes of 'the city of the Hippacritans and Uticans' going over 'to the Libyans'. He stresses how 'irrational' this was for people who had hitherto shown unswerving loyalty to the Carthaginians, not only against attackers like Agathocles and Regulus but in the present war too. He clearly envisages a sudden mass turn-around in feeling at both towns, which accounts for him using the singular 'city'. This fairly certainly simplifies things. Polybius, unsurprisingly, has small interest in the internal affairs of the two towns, while the pro-Carthaginian cast of his narrative made any defection simply reprehensible, whatever its cause. Later items suggest a more complex situation in either town.

When the war ended, Utica was treated fairly leniently. It kept its self-government and alliance with Carthage, and thirty-five years later stoutly resisted Scipio's siege. Nor was Hippacra subjected to destructive treatment, though we do not have details; interestingly, one of Hannibal's trusted officers, Muttones, was to be a Hippacritan. Despite defecting, then, the towns seem to have escaped unusually harsh punishment afterwards. Rather than one and the same group of leaders first giving staunch loyalty to the Carthaginians, only to switch abruptly to

¹⁶ Presumably because starvation at Carthage did not follow the loss of the convoy, Loreto (163–4) thinks that it was not Carthage that needed the supplies but Hippacra and Utica, which defected in despair. Utica's attempted surrender to the Romans: Pol. 1.83.12, giving no explanation or date. Veith (1912) 543, and Huss (1985) 263 n. 86, assume it preceded joining the rebels, whereas De Sanctis, 3.1.386 n. 33, dates it afterwards, and Walbank, *Comm.* 1.148, even more specifically to after Spendius' death. Similarly Loreto (1995) 198, who in turn relies on Appian's term 'cities' (*Lib.* 5.20, πόλεις) to infer that Hippacra, too, approached the Romans. On *deditio*, (e.g.) W. Dahlheim, *Struktur und Entwicklung des römischen Völkerrechts* (München, 1968) 5–82; Walbank, *Comm.* 3.79–81; D. Nörr, *Aspekte des römischen Völkerrechts: die Bronzetafel von Alcántara* (München, 1989) 28–50, 72–93, 143–53; Hoyos (1990); A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration* (London, 1993); 16–18; Eckstein (1995b); Hoyos (1998) 47–51.

the rebels, it may well be that a coup by a pro-rebel, rival clique took control of either town while the loyalist chiefs fled, to be reinstated at war's end. The defections look as though they were synchronised—something not too hard to arrange, for the malcontents in one town could keep touch with the other group by sea or via the rebels outside the walls. The rival oligarchs need not have been numerous: they needed only to win over enough disillusioned and hungry citizens for a time. The blow was sudden, the Carthaginian soldiers and their commanders in both places taken by surprise and overpowered. The new masters of Hippacra and Utica now 'handed over the city [singular again] to the Libyans'.¹⁷

Interestingly, Polybius does not write 'to the Libyans and the mercenaries' or 'to the enemy', even though he uses both these phrases later on again. His phrase here may reflect a factual detail, that outside the two towns the besiegers were all or nearly all Libyan. By now the mercenaries in the rebel forces must have been well below their original strength, even if a trickle of new foreign recruits and deserters was still arriving. Most of the remaining professionals would be operating in theatres that Mathos and Spendius judged more critical, notably outside Carthage and against Hamilcar and Hanno. Some Libyan soldiers, moreover, would share links via their home towns with Utica and Hippacra. Both towns had relations of their own with their Libyan neighbours, as the term 'Libyphoenician' reminds us. This made contacts and overtures easier between pro-rebel factions and the forces outside.

Handing over the towns means letting troops in. This also makes sense, just as Hanno's leaving Carthaginian troops there did. Libyan garrisons would not only help defend the towns against Carthaginian attack, but also help safeguard the new régimes against internal dissent. The régimes—perhaps pressured by their new allies, perhaps voluntarily to show solidarity—had the Carthaginian soldiers all slaughtered and the bodies flung from the walls. Then when an appeal came from Carthage, presumably by sea, to let the dead be gathered for burial, it was rejected. The bodies would be left to carrion birds and animals. Such ruthless-

¹⁷ 'Irrational' defection: Pol. 1.82.9–10 (ἁλόγου ἀποστάσεως); 'to the Libyans', 82.10. Utica and Hippacra after the war: Gsell, 2.292, 3.123; M. LeGlay, *KIP* 5.1082. Hannibal's Hippacritan officer (Muttines): V. Ehrenberg, *RE* 23 (1935) 1428–30; cf. L.-M. Günther, *Neue Pauly* 8.653–4.

ness recalled the treatment of Gisco and the other prisoners at Tunes, though we may hope the preliminary mutilations were left out.

Almost overnight, control of the north-eastern coast of Libya passed to the rebels. Even more important, the forces that had been anchored outside both towns were free to join in Mathos' and Spendius' next major move. They decided to launch a siege of Carthage itself.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE SIEGE OF CARTHAGE

Carthage had been under blockade ever since the revolt started, so it is worth asking how far a siege differed from this. The blockading forces, based on Tunes, had already cut the city off from its hinterland: Hamilcar's original march to the Bagradas had been practicable only by night and by using the tidal effect of a strong wind at the river's mouth. The rebels no doubt took extra care after that to prevent any more breakouts, but the tightness of the blockade must have varied in the year or so that followed. After Hamilcar's victories and his operations through parts of Libya, supplies and support for the rebels around Carthage, Utica and Hippacra slackened, as we have seen. But with the new lease of life won by the rebellion, the situation changed outside Carthage too. Mathos' and Spendius' decision to lay Carthage under actual siege was a propaganda coup as well as a bold military move, reinforcing the impact made by the Carthaginians' recent catastrophes. Besides encouraging the Libyans to keep supplying munitions and no doubt money, these developments seem to have prompted more recruits to join up. Polybius a while later reports Spendius, Autaritus and the Libyan Zarzas at the head of bigger forces than ever. It was quite likely now that Zarzas brought in—or went out and recruited—a fresh Libyan division under his own command. The movement may have attracted fresh mercenary recruits from abroad too. Punic naval patrols could hardly hope to prevent all from getting through. Strikingly, envoys from Utica had been able to sail to Rome with an appeal for help—a mission the Carthaginians would dearly have wanted to thwart, but failed to.¹

Besieging the city, instead of blockading it, first of all meant moving forces closer to its walls. This called for trenches and protective equipment like mantlets. Attacks on the city fortifications, especially at any points that looked vulnerable, might be launched from time to time. The rebels did have some siege-engines, those captured from Hanno

¹ Bigger forces than ever, and Zarzas' division: Pol. 1.84.3. Uticans' appeal to Rome: 1.82.11.

outside Utica early on. Perhaps they were able to fashion more, for some of the veterans of Sicily may have had the technical skills, and craftsmen among the army's camp-followers might try making replicas of Hanno's engines. But if any direct assaults were tried, they failed against the powerful fortifications and the city's resourceful defenders. Another way of capturing a city, one often tried when force failed, was treachery within. Both Hannibal and his Roman adversaries were to exploit this successfully three decades later. Mathos and Spendius may have had the money, but found no takers. Solidarity within the gates of Carthage was clearly high. Even slaves, who must have been many, gave the authorities no known trouble. This left only the third, the slowest and least reliable method, trying to starve the city into surrender.

Before the siege opened, the impasse between the Carthaginian generals was resolved. The army, or at least its citizen element, decided that Hanno must retire from command. News of Utica's and Hippacra's defections may have influenced the men, for arguably it had been Hanno's withdrawal from the coast that pushed the towns over the edge of rebellion. If so, he had a right to complain, since he had withdrawn at Hamilcar's summons. More important, though, was surely that Hanno had few active achievements to his credit since his early, limited victory at Utica. Hamilcar had won two victories on a bigger scale, and then had been scouring the countryside of rebels—until Hanno joined him. The army preferred the bold risk-taker to the cautious calculator.

Polybius shows that, as the siege of Carthage opened, the field army already had a replacement for Hanno. This was a general named Hannibal. His appointment raises more questions. If the solution to the deadlock was to remove one of the two generals, why give the army two again? Hamilcar and Naravas had worked together well before, without any second Punic commander beside them. Nor was it a standing requirement that Punic operations must have two generals. Would Hanno have been sent another colleague if the troops had retired Hamilcar? In his campaigns in Libya around 247, he was (it seems) sole commander, just as he was at the start of this war. Again, what was the new man's status relative to Hamilcar: general with equal powers, meaning the risk of another clash, or Hamilcar's lieutenant? As so often on details, we have no help from Polybius. But we may draw reasonable inferences from events earlier and later.²

² Hannibal replacing Hanno: Pol. 1.82.12—even by Polybian standards a sentence of notable clumsiness. The vote against Hanno and the appointment of Hannibal are

Hamilcar, Hannibal and the Numidian lord now continued operations across Libya, this time aiming to hamper the siege of the city: they ‘traversed the country, cutting off supplies to Mathos and Spendius.’ It looks as though Hannibal was delegated a division of his own, for there was no point in appointing a second general simply to act as Hamilcar’s deputy in the same army. Probably he took over Hanno’s troops. Hamilcar thus aimed to campaign flexibly, with two armies moving separately but in collaboration against enemy formations. Polybius’ references to Hannibal make it clear that, in practice, he was under Hamilcar’s orders. The army’s decision on who should retire from command, and who remain, presupposed this and it may have been official, for other instances of lieutenant-generals (as we might term them) are known. The most striking perhaps was the Hanno who reportedly was Hamilcar’s great-nephew, and who served with Hannibal in the Second Punic War, often leading a separate unit and even a separate army but plainly always under Hannibal’s authority.³

For the same reason, it makes no sense to suppose Hannibal a member of an anti-Barcid faction, any more than to see Hanno as such a faction’s long-established leader. Sending out an ally of the disgraced general to take his place would have been fatuous when the obvious need was to give Hamilcar a colleague he could rely on. Conceivably he had named Hannibal as his preference; given the situation, his wish could not be refused. Certainly Hannibal’s appointment should not be seen as an oligarchic or anti-Barcid faction’s political counter to Hanno’s removal. This notion is belied, anyway, by the cooperation that followed between Hamilcar, Naravas and the new man. Who Hannibal was we do not know—an old identification of him with a subordinate general against the Romans in 250–249 is just a guess—but he must have had some experience of command. Events showed that Hamilcar found him reliable and hardworking. Hanno meanwhile returned to the city. His organising skills would be valuable and he remained active (so his later recall to field command suggests). Possibly he now took over gar-

given as a flashback within the report of the new operations (incidentally producing a grammatical anacoluthon). It well illustrates Polybius’ efforts to compress his account of events. De Sanctis, 3.1.380, supposes that Hannibal was then detailed to protect Carthage against its besiegers, but this directly contradicts Polybius (82.13). Picard, *Hann.* 73, imaginatively depicts Hanno refusing to accept his removal and proclaiming that ‘la force seule l’empêchait d’exercer son commandement’; there is no authority for this.

³ ‘Traversed the country’: Pol. 1.82.13. Hanno, Hannibal’s nephew: Lenschau, *RE* 7 (1912) 2357–8; in Italy, Hoyos (2003) 128–31, 135–6. On Punic subordinate generals cf. Gsell, 2.422–3.

rison-command there. For though Polybius afterwards writes of him 'resuming' a generalship only some time later, this may refer only to a field command. If not, whoever did command in the city would have been wise to have Hanno at his side.⁴

Before the new military troika could do very much, the siege of Carthage started. For, as already quoted, Polybius now reports Hamilcar's aim, in concert with Hannibal and Naravas, as 'cutting off supplies to Mathos and Spendius' from the interior. This must imply that much of Libya continued, or resumed, its resistance. It confirms the inference about the disillusion Hamilcar's harsh methods had provoked. But the war now entered its obscurest months, for Polybius writes the barest summary of what happened. Helped by their friends overseas, the Carthaginians held out against the siege. By contrast, 'the forces of Mathos and Spendius proved to be no less besieged than besieging. For Hamilcar imposed such a want of supplies on them that they were finally forced to raise the siege.' It should be inferred that this all took a certain amount of time, almost certainly several months. The siege of Carthage was launched, on a plausible calculation, in the second half of 239. August or September seems a reasonable dating, for Polybius stresses how important was the flow of supplies from Sicily and Italy to the city. Building up adequate stocks, especially with another winter ahead, had to be as great a priority at Carthage as denying them to the besiegers was for Hamilcar, Hannibal and Naravas. Substantial quantities could arrive only before late autumn and winter—the non-sailing season—closed in. Of course hardy and desperate shippers might keep going amid the risks of storms, but from about mid-October the flow must inevitably slacken.⁵

The rebels avoided a direct assault, so the only realistic prospect was to try starving out the city. Yet so long as summer and early autumn lasted, they had no hope of this, because of their lack of seapower. As

⁴ Hanno's replacement Hannibal 'ein Gegner der barcinischen Partei': Meltzer, 2.383, echoed by Gómez (1996) 296–7. Hannibal belonging 'sans doute à la famille barcide': Picard, *Hann.* 72–3. Seen as the Hannibal, son of a different Hamilcar, who had been trierarch (technically naval commodore but in practice a deputy general) in Sicily ten years earlier: de Sanctis, 3.1.380 n. 25; Picard, *Hann.* 73; but cf. Walbank, 1.146; Loreto (1995) 165 n. 20.

⁵ 'The forces of Mathos and Spendius' &c.: 84.1–2 (my translation). Date of siege of Carthage: Hoyos (2000) 374–6. Flaubert's version of the siege (*Salammô*, chap. 13) exaggerates the horrific effects, including a supposed child-sacrifice ceremony and Hamilcar coming back to help in the defence.

mentioned earlier, the Syracusans under Hiero had from the start been active suppliers, a prudent self-interest which Polybius strongly commends. Now the king redoubled his efforts. The Romans too stepped up theirs, obviously not from the same motives as Hiero but to prevent an anarchic collapse of political and social order in North Africa. The city's harbour lay on the side furthest from the land walls, so Mathos and Spendius at Tunes could see the comings and goings of navy and merchant ships, transport vessels and all other types of seagoing craft. They were helpless to do anything against them.⁶

How the needed supplies—food, wine, weapons, cloths, timber and other materials—were paid for is not reported. Some state revenues, notably tribute from territories in revolt, must have dwindled drastically. But some tribute from areas like Emporia and perhaps Cape Bon would still be coming in, even if less than usual because of communications problems, enemy raids, and simple avoidance. In later prosperous times, Emporia seems to have paid a rate of one talent a day, or 6,000 drachmas, in tribute. Even if this was now erratic and had fallen as low as the equivalent of one talent a week, it was still vital. Trade continued, as the Italian-traders episode and its aftermath show, so harbour-dues would still bring in revenue. On the other hand the Carthaginians by now would have only limited goods to trade: items manufactured in the city itself, perhaps some produce that could be shipped in from loyal areas, and rebel prisoners to sell as slaves—though, with Hamilcar regularly putting his to death, there cannot have been many of these. Gifts and loans, voluntary or compulsory, from wealthy Carthaginians can also be supposed, and other loans (at whatever rates of interest) from friendly states abroad. Phoenician sister-cities like Gades, Carthage's mother-city Tyre in Phoenicia itself, and trading partners would be called on. Cyrene, for instance, across the deserts to the east, shared a border with the republic and could only be alarmed at the threat of a predatory Libyan and mercenary state taking over Carthage and

⁶ Siege methods and machines: Kromayer & Veith (1928) 209–43, especially 227–43; Y. Garlan in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn., vol. 7 Part 1: *The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank et al. (Cambridge, 1984) 357–60. Syracusan help to Carthage: 83.2–4 (83.3 in my transl.; 'strong powers', τοῖς ἰσχυροῖσι); Polybius' commendation, 83.3. His further maxim (83.4), that no one should be allowed to build up power so overwhelming that it can crush even publicly-recognised rights, shows he had in mind the Romans' hegemony in Greece in his own day (cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.146, and (1972) 167; Eckstein (1995a) 208). For in 240–239 it was not a question of them treating Hiero or even the Carthaginians high-handedly.

its navy. Even the Romans and Hiero may have advanced funds or encouraged traders to extend credit for goods. Temple treasures, too, were an obvious emergency resource, though we have no record of how much silver and gold they may have contained.⁷

As calculated earlier, the army of Sicily before 241, some 20,000 strong, notionally cost the republic about 2,180 talents a year in *opsonion* and *sitarchia*. Hamilcar's field army, and forces like the garrison defending Carthage and any units protecting Cape Bon, must have totalled twice those numbers at least. The fleet also had to be financed. On the other hand, costs would be much lower than the notional level, for just as pay and ration-money had been skimped before 241, now they were surely cut back in the same way (or even further) to fight a war of survival. Mercenaries would have to be paid fairly regularly, but citizen troops, and even some allied soldiers, were unlikely to complain about making sacrifices during the emergency. In turn civil expenditure, apart from essentials like the imports of food and materials, would be cut to the bone. An informed guess, then, puts the republic's expenses at 2,000 to 2,500 talents a year during the war. This was about the same as its total estimated revenues in 241.⁸

There is another, tentative clue to the size of Carthaginian war-finances. Just after the revolt ended, the Romans took advantage of Punic weakness to seize Sardinia and extract 1,200 talents (7,200,000 drachmas) from the Punic treasury. This was not a multiple of three or four years' arrears of the peace-indemnity's 220 talents per annum (though, as noted earlier, the Romans had possibly suspended this while the revolt lasted). The amount was in fact larger than the thousand talents levied from the Carthaginians in 241. Still, they managed to pay it and, at the same time, could afford to send Hamilcar with his army on his empire-building expedition to Spain. Why the Romans fixed on 1,200 talents is unknown; they were facing no severe new costs of their own at the time. Arguably this was their reckoning of what it would cost the Carthaginians to launch a major new expedition—with

⁷ Emporia's tribute: Livy 34.62.3 records this as the tribute of Lepcis (i.e. Magna, on the Gulf of Sirte); but for the view that it was the tribute from all Emporia see Chapter 4 n. 11.

⁸ Loreto (1995) 51–5 speculates about possible Carthaginian borrowings from sister cities and trading partners when negotiating over the army of Sicily's arrears (cf. Chapter 4 n. 17), but does not explore how they financed the war afterwards. Costs and arrears of the army of Sicily (approximately 127 talents a month in *opsonion* and 55 in *sitarchia*), and Carthaginian revenues in 241: Chapter 4.

the suspicion that Sardinia was not its sole target—and they aimed to cripple the finances for that. The reckoning, like the suspicion, may have been wrong, or been intended to leave the republic just enough funds to keep Africa under postwar control. But it fits within the rough order of magnitude of Carthaginian finances estimated above.⁹

Polybius again uses a literary device to help indicate that the siege of the city lasted some time. This is the inserted report of Hiero's and the Romans' dealings with the Carthaginians from the outbreak of the revolt, complete with the traders-episode. Most of the insert could have been narrated, just as suitably if not more so, soon after his account of the outbreak: for instance after Hanno's Utica campaign, closer to the actual time of the traders' affair. All the historian would need to mention now would be how Syracuse and Rome redoubled their efforts when the city came under direct siege. Of course it is a narrative convenience to gather all the details of foreign help in one place. That Polybius puts it here, though, recalls previous uses of the same device—to indicate a period of time between Gisco's starting to pay off the army arrears and Mathos' and Spendius' engineering of the mutiny; and later to show that before Hanno could move against the rebels in the field, he needed time to organise and equip an army. A related device to show the passage of time and (probably) the order of events is Polybius' careful arrangement of narrative from Hanno's and Hamilcar's quarrel breaking out, continuing with the catalogue of ensuing Punic disasters, and then on to the siege of Carthage being formed.¹⁰

For Hamilcar, the urgent task was to concentrate on relieving Carthage. He had to ignore most of Libya, which as mentioned above seems to have remained in, or reverted to, rebellion. This setback to what he had achieved in all the months since the victory over Spendius and Autaritus is not commented on by Polybius—hardly a surprise—but for Mathos and his confrères it was a success, of a sort anyway. Very likely most of the Libyan communities on whom the rebellion depended for money, munitions and men were freed from Hamilcar's terror operations, for in order to harass Carthage's besiegers and hamper their

⁹ On the Sardinia crisis of 237 see Schwarte (1993); Hoyos (1998) chap. ix; Ameling (2001); below, Chapter 22.

¹⁰ Hiero's and Rome's relations with Carthage: 1.83. Other items implying passage of time: Chapter 7 and n. 6; Chapter 20 and n. 10.

supplies, he, Hannibal and Naravas would have to base themselves nearer Tunes. One strategic site could be Thuburbo Minus, today's Tébourba on the north bank of the Bagradas, 35 kilometres west of the rebel headquarters. Troops ranging the countryside from there could cut off traffic coming down the Bagradas valley or from the region known in Roman times as the *pagus Muxsitanius*, between Thurburbo and Hippacra. They could also—with some effort—harass coastal communications from Tunes to Hippacra. To Thuburbo's south-east lay Inuca, 20 kilometres away and only 16 inland from Tunes, while a little to Inuca's west stood Sicilibba. Both commanded another road from the middle Bagradas region to the coast, and they communicated with the productive countryside to the east, along the Mellane river. Another possible base, close to the Mellane, might be Uthina (the site now called Oudna), 40 kilometres south-east of Thuburbo with Tunes just 20 kilometres directly to its north.

To quarantine the besiegers from supplies, the army had to be divided up, yet not parcelled out too thinly. A pair of bases in the areas described, with a few subsidiary strong points around them, would be the most effective method. The point was not to hold a continuous line around Tunes but to control the main routes, for most of the supplies the rebels needed had to be borne by pack-animals or in wagons, and would have to use those routes. A trickle might get through along byways and across fields, but this could not keep the tens of thousands of enemy troops properly fed. Naravas' cavalry, much feared by the rebels, could sweep the countryside, terrorising suspect travellers and, when necessary, alerting nearby strongpoints to intervene with infantry and elephants. This would explain, too, why Hamilcar wanted a reliable Carthaginian colleague. He could not look for quick results with the forces at hand, but methodical patrolling, local spies, and continuing terror actions can all be inferred.¹¹

Over time, his methods worked. The besiegers found themselves running short. Winter added to their troubles, if as is likely the siege started in the second half of the year. Fewer munitions, not to mention funds, were now available—and the fewer the supply trains, the easier they were to intercept. Even rogue merchants from other lands were largely cut off from Tunes, Utica and Hippacra by the dangers of winter sailing. Hamilcar's forces, too, no doubt faced reduced rations

¹¹ Walter (1947) 248 places Hamilcar on the left, i.e. north, bank of the Bagradas.

and tougher conditions. With fodder limited, the cavalry's activities in particular would have to be cut back, not to mention the elephant corps. Even so they steadily won the upper hand in what were effectively twin sieges, as Polybius points out, one within the other.

The rebels made no effort—or only failed efforts—to drive them away: Polybius does not explain why. Perhaps he assumes that diseased psychology entailed cowardice as well as savagery. Temporarily this may have been true—the rebels' generals, at least, surely feared to risk yet another defeat, which might prompt their own overthrow. Instead of two bickering and contradictory Carthaginian leaders, they faced an integrated command under Hamilcar who was plainly well served by his lieutenants Hannibal and Naravas. It was only when driven to desperation that the rebels did at last break out, apparently early in the new year 238. Meanwhile Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus had no better plan than to keep up the siege of Carthage. Their bracing success in winning over Utica and Hippacra proved paradoxical: certainly it and the other factors had given a vital new impulse to the revolt, yet everything led into a cul de sac. The two towns brought very few new resources to the war-effort, though they did release the units previously blockading them. Besieging Carthage had been the obvious, indeed necessary next step, but it effectively trapped the besiegers in an unwinnable scenario. They could not take the city. They could not elude Hamilcar's blockade. And now Hamilcar began to make them starve.¹²

¹² Besiegers starve: Pol. 1.82.13, 84.1. Seibert, *FzH* 102–3, discounts the effect of Hamilcar's forces ('der Feind war keineswegs geschwächt') and sees the rebels lifting the siege because they realised they could not keep it up.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE SAW

Finally the rebels' endurance snapped. They broke up the siege. Polybius elliptically leaves it to the reader to work out what that meant in practice. Not that the rebel forces marched off to some other part of Libya, for it turns out that Tunes and its environs continued to be held. In practice, then, Mathos and Spendius simply withdrew from whatever siege-positions they had set up outside Carthage's walls. The Carthaginians were thus relieved from threat of direct assault. But the old positions stretching from Tunes and its gulf northward to the Bagradas, as well as at Utica and Hippacra beyond, were kept. The land routes into Carthage remained cut. In effect, the rebels returned to blockading the city from a distance rather than besieging it.¹

But if this was not as great a success for the Carthaginians as Polybius might like to imply, neither did it much ease rebel sufferings. Lifting the siege could not avoid striking a serious blow against morale—both in the army and across Libya. Worse, the men were still being starved of food and materials by the inexorable Hamilcar. Mathos and Spendius had two choices left. For any prospect of victory, the Punic field forces must be destroyed; if not, the rebels must sue for peace. Of course peace was not something the leadership could consider. If it came, the best they could hope for would be a quick execution by the sword, but Hamilcar more likely had the elephants or the cross in mind for them. The same fears no doubt played on their officers and rank-and-file; all remembered the horrors outside Hippacra and their continuing mistreatment of prisoners. Ironically enough, Hamilcar's insistence on slaughtering his own prisoners was helping to keep the movement going even at this desperate stage.

'After some time', Polybius writes, 'they assembled the best of the mercenaries and the Libyans' and marched out against the Carthaginian field forces. He uses the plural 'they', having just mentioned Mathos

¹ Pol. 1.84.2 (siege lifted); 84.12, 85.1, 86.3 (Tunes still held). Pédech (1969) 133 n. 2 supposes that Mathos returned to besieging Carthage when 'Hamilcar ait poursuivi Spendius', but neither idea is plausible.

and Spendius. But later, at the climax of this new expeditionary campaign, we suddenly find that Mathos was not present; later still, that he was at Tunes. By then the campaign had lasted quite some time, so possibly he accompanied the other generals to start with, then after a while returned to headquarters. But that would have left Tunes for some weeks or months without a senior general, while we saw earlier that field campaigning was not Mathos' forte. More likely he kept command at Tunes throughout and it was Autaritus, Spendius and now Zarzas who ventured forth.

Polybius gives their forces as 50,000 strong, 'with whom, too,' he adds, 'was Zarzas the Libyan, leading those under his command.' This is in fact Zarzas' first appearance in the narrative, and he plainly led a division of his own. Polybius' wording merits notice once again. Not only were Zarzas' numbers additional, it seems, to the 'fifty thousand', but Polybius marks his force out rather as he did Autaritus' Gauls in the first inland expedition. Zarzas must have had a fair amount of military experience, if now he was not only a divisional general but also one of the expedition-leaders. Possibly he had served in the army of Sicily. If so, he had not been prominent when the mutiny broke out, but maybe had risen through the ranks afterwards. Yet the way his division is described points to a measure of autonomy from the rest of the expeditionary army. An alternative possibility, then, is that he was a Libyan notable—with military experience—who had recently raised a force on his own authority and brought it to Tunes. The defections of Hippacra and Utica, and the other Carthaginian disasters, would have encouraged him. Yet why would a Libyan notable have taken so long to join the movement? One other factor could have played a part: the slaughters, ravagings and sackings that Hamilcar thought necessary to intimidate the Libyans.²

If such was Zarzas' background, then his position vis-à-vis the old leadership could help explain the rarely-occurring letter Ζ on some coins of 'the Libyans'. As noted earlier, these are not accompanied by an M. Conceivably Zarzas had charge of the rebel mint on occasion,

² Pol. 1.84.3 (my translations). Mathos not with the expedition, cf. 85.2 and 5; at Tunes, 86.2, &c. 'With whom, too, was Zarzas', μεθ' ὧν ἦν καὶ Ζάρζας (84.3); Meltzer, 2.383–4, also suggests that Zarzas had brought in fresh forces. Autaritus and his Gauls earlier: 77.1 and 4. Huss (1985) 264 n. 90 suggests that the Libyan form of Zarzas' name was Ζῖβτς. The similar-sounding name Zarzis (a resort town south of the Île de Jerba and close to the border with Libya) is medieval or modern.

for instance while the other generals had been preoccupied with other tasks, like pressing the siege of Carthage and trying to get supplies safely through to Tunes. As a Libyan leader in his own right, he need not feel required to add Mathos' initial to his own. On the other hand, the rarity of the coins suggests he was not given too many opportunities at the mint. It would not be surprising if Mathos viewed him with some reserve, and saw him off from Tunes with mixed feelings.³

That the expeditionary army was 50,000 strong, or more, is widely doubted. Supposedly this is too large to be plausible or to suit the countryside where it had to operate. A related view is that the rebels' strength was inflated by Polybius' pro-Hamilcar source or sources, to make Hamilcar's victory more impressive. But we do not know where in the extensive Libyan countryside the operations did take place. The advancing rebels could draw at least basic supplies from many Libyan towns and villages, especially those who had suffered from Hamilcar. Neither army could campaign for long in districts of total wilderness, which would have been pointless in any case.

As for the rebels' numbers, other sizeable ancient armies, too, are known in this countryside: for instance Scipio Africanus in 203 against his Punic and Numidian opponents, Hasdrubal and Syphax, culminating in the battle of the Great Plains near Bulla, just north of the upper Bagradas. Then in 202 Scipio and Hannibal manoeuvred farther south, between the Bagradas and Siliana rivers, until they clashed at the battle of Zama. A century later, in 109, the consul Metellus invaded Numidian territory (as it now was), won over Vaga north of the Bagradas, and then fought larger forces under the Numidian king Jugurtha—Naravas' great-great-nephew, as it happens—by the river Muthul, today's Mel-lègue south of the Bagradas, in the region near modern Jendouba. In other words, campaigning by sizeable armies in the Libyan hinterland was feasible, even if not easy. Against Hamilcar the rebels would dare move only in strength. But apart from his army, there were no large Carthaginian forces they needed to fear. The garrison holding Carthage may have numbered 10,000 or so, enough to fix about twice that number in the positions around Tunes. It makes sense, then, to infer that the bulk of the rebel troops were sent out against Hamilcar. Even

³ Loreto (1995) 108–9 sees Zarzas, like Mathos, as probably a Libyan 'signorotto o capotribù' of middling rank. Coinage of 'the Libyans': Chapter 12.

if Polybius' 50,000 is a rough estimate and includes Zarzas' corps, it should still be the right order of magnitude.⁴

Polybius calls them (Zarzas' division apart) 'the best of the mercenaries and the Libyans'. This flattering description cannot realistically have applied to all the breakout troops, supposedly 50,000 out of (say) seventy thousand in all. After all, the breakout involved the bulk of the remaining rebel forces, most of whom had enlisted once the revolt started. The expedition's core, though, would consist of Libyan and mercenary veterans of the old army of Sicily, along with Libyans recruited late in 241 or early in 240 who by now would be veterans themselves. Polybius is careful to indicate that not all surviving veterans were sent out. It was important for Mathos to keep a few thousand old-timers at Tunes, not risk holding headquarters with only recent volunteers.⁵

The crucial first move was to drive Hamilcar off. The roads from the interior had to be opened up for relief supplies to reach not only the units remaining at Tunes but the expeditionary army too. We must assume that Hamilcar would not let himself be dislodged easily; so for the famished units under Spendius and his confrères it called for a desperate effort. Clearly they succeeded, though Polybius is not interested in reporting how, for the historian then describes the campaign as ranging extensively over hills and valleys, each side striving to outmanoeuvre the other. A tentative scenario for what happened can be offered. As suggested above, at the outset of the campaign the Carthaginian forces were most likely watching the main routes to Tunes: Hamilcar maybe commanding the Bagradas valley from somewhere like Thuburbo Minus; Hannibal the country to his south-east at Inuca or Uthina; and Naravas, whatever his base, patrolling between and around them. This

⁴ Expedition's numbers: 15,000 according to Veith (1912) 570–1, stressing the difficult countryside; de Sanctis 3.1.381 n. 26 suggests 20,000; likewise Walbank, 1.146; while Huss (1985) 263 n. 88 declares Polybius' figure 'überhöht'. Meltzer, 2.383, and Loreto (1995) 169 n. 1, accept 50,000. Walter (1947) 248 improbably supposes it was now that the rebels received fresh reinforcements. An exaggeration, to inflate Hamilcar's glory: Walbank, *ibid.*; Pédech (1969) 132 n. 1. Spendius' and Autaritus' earlier forces from Tunes: Chapter 11. Armies at the Great Plains and Zama: Lazenby (1978) 209–10, 220–21. At the Muthul, Metellus had a consular army of two legions (P.A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1971) 430), Jugurtha a larger force (cf. Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 52.1–2). Jendouba stands on the Mejerda 35 km. north of Le Kef.

⁵ Loreto (1995) 169 thinks that all the remaining veterans of Sicily were sent out, while hypothesising a rebel corps of 20,000 left at Tunis (169 n. 1). De Sanctis, 3.1.381, supposes that Hannibal's army was still outside Carthage and held this corps in check.

could help Spendius' breakout. A fast sortie from Tunes, spearheaded by the veterans—maybe by night, like Hamilcar's early thrust from Carthage to the Bagradas—could cause enough consternation and difficulty to keep Hamilcar and Hannibal from acting together fast. To coordinate their response, the Punic generals must then retreat inland, for neither could afford to hold his own position if the other did not. Naravas, in turn, would have to go with them. In some such fashion, the rebels pushed the Carthaginian field forces into the countryside once more. Then they sought to wear them down.

Polybius sketches the rebels' campaign-methods. 'They proceeded again to march parallel [to the Punic forces] on the open ground and shadow Hamilcar. Thus they avoided level terrain, terrified as they were of his elephants and Naravas' cavalry, and strove to be the first to occupy the hills and passes.' In other words they did much the same as their earlier expedition had. There was no point in advancing against Hamilcar in one massed lumbering force; he could all too easily sidestep, outflank, harass and entrap that. They had to turn those tables on him. This was far from impossible—Spendius and Autaritus had used similar methods earlier and had cornered Hamilcar, though thanks to the arrival of the Libyan reinforcements and the Numidian cavalry; he had been shadowed, harassed and finally boxed in by three collaborating enemy corps. Plainly this was what the rebel generals tried once more.⁶

But now they had only their own units from Tunes to use, while Hamilcar had a larger army. This again points to them bringing out the bulk of the troops, to hold the advantage of numbers. If one division of the Punic forces became separated from the others, they could concentrate a powerful body against it, yet post enough men to hold off or at least harass the rest as they came up in support. The threatened division, in turn, would have to choose whether to fight where it stood or retreat. If it retreated, Spendius' commonsense riposte would be to try to block it from rejoining the others—he might not succeed, but at least he could hope to maul the force en route. On the other hand,

⁶ Pol. 1.84.3–4 (my transl.). Instead of 'they proceeded again', Paton has 'they tried again their former plan', for ὥρμησαν ἀνθις, giving what happened but not what Polybius writes. Rebels feared elephants and cavalry: 84.4. Seibert, too (*FzH* 103), sees the rebels as setting out to hunt down Hamilcar—'Hamilkar wurde zum Gejagten'—but thinks they were able to maintain this initiative throughout the ensuing campaign; this contradicts Polybius' account.

against a united Punic army the rebels could seek to attack from different sides and try to break it up. Whatever cavalry they possessed would need to be used against Naravas' squadrons, but pretty clearly the rebel cavalry was poor and, almost certainly too, it was outnumbered.

These were extraordinarily risky tactics, for the rebels had to face all three military arms—infantry, cavalry and elephants—and Naravas and the elephants caused them special fear. It seems they had no elephants themselves. In his turn Hamilcar could use the same strategy and tactics against them: Polybius in fact reports he did. But in a desperate situation the rebels had little choice. Frustratingly, Polybius' account yet again lacks place-names, with no indication of how long it lasted, and barely rising above generalities. In aggressiveness and daring, he affirms, the rebels matched their foes—an unusual compliment, and promptly qualified by criticism: they lacked 'the experience and vigour of generalship', shackled as they were by 'military unskilfulness and mindless routine'. Obviously he is thinking particularly of Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas as a contrast with Hamilcar. Therefore (he goes on) Hamilcar could run his campaign 'like a good draughts-player', now cutting off units, now luring rebel forces into ambushes or throwing them into panic by materialising totally unexpectedly by day or at night. We certainly get a vivid impression of marches and countermarches, unforeseen twists and turns, fighting of various kinds, and Hamilcar gradually gaining the upper hand. Place-names and time-indicators are obviously of no interest to Polybius at this stage, focussing as he does on moral and psychological features in the struggle. Yet some deductions can be made.⁷

At some point Hamilcar united his forces or at least moved them into close proximity. This could have been in reaction to the rebels' first advance from Tunes. For as soon as campaigning reached the uplands, it would have been asking for destruction to keep the Punic divisions widely separate—for instance with a range of heights between them, or on both sides of a river like the Bagradas, the Siliana or the Muthul. At the same time, maintaining one constant mass of twenty to thirty thousand troops would mean sacrificing flexibility in narrow country,

⁷ 1.84.3–8; actions against individual units, ἐν ταῖς κατὰ μέρος χρίαις; so too Loreto, 170; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.147. Seibert, *FzH* 103, is suspicious of the rebels' many alleged defeats because of Polybius' earlier praise (1.74.9)—'hatten sie alles vergessen?' But in fact the rebels did win some fights (n. 11), and in any case the veterans of Sicily were surely a small proportion by now of rebel forces overall.

though the agile Numidian cavalry could still scout up and down the slopes and help to screen the flanks. Most likely, then, the army's formation varied, sometimes two corps (Hamilcar's and Hannibal's) advancing in mutual support on open ground, sometimes in a carefully articulated column-of-march through a valley. Polybius mentions only Hamilcar practising a cat-and-mouse series of traps, ambushes and captures, but plainly Spendius and his colleagues did the same with him. After all, their aggressiveness, boldness, moves to seize hills and passes—in other words, tactically crucial locations—and prisoner-taking in various clashes amounted to similar tactics, even if they might be less skilfully executed.

Again, the marches and movements lasted quite some time. A reasonable reckoning would see the siege of Carthage lifted as the spring of 238 began. Not only did seaborne supplies to the city become easier, making a siege even more fruitless, but food would start to become available in the Libyan countryside and it was vital for Mathos and Spendius to break Hamilcar's starvation-blockade. We should estimate Spendius' breakout campaign then lasting some while, say three or four months from about March to June or July, climaxing at the place called The Saw. That would date the events at The Saw, which in turn lasted some weeks, to about July and August 238.⁸

Another deduction is that the manoeuvring, ambushes and fights did not always go Hamilcar's way. Polybius does report him destroying many of the enemy in his attacks, and sometimes 'without a fight'. The phrase suggests rebels so disheartened that they let themselves be killed, or captured and then killed. This may have happened at times to stragglers and detachments. But not only did the main body or bodies under Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas not lose heart; before long we learn, *en passant*, that they took prisoners too. Defeated forces may still capture prisoners, of course, but the context shows—as we shall see—that these then accompanied their captors as the campaign proceeded. No doubt they were used alongside the rebels' slaves for every sort of task.⁹

⁸ On the chronology cf. Hoyos (2000) 376–7, dating events at The Saw during the summer. Loreto's estimates put the siege much earlier, about March to September 239 ((1995) 213), but against this see Hoyos, 376 n. 12, (where '240' is a slip for '239').

⁹ Rebel successes: so too Loreto, 170. 'Without a fight' (ἀμαχεί), 1.84.7. Prisoners taken by rebels too, 85.1; cf. Loreto, 170–1.

Spendius and his colleagues, therefore, kept their forces in being, continued to fight, and sometimes got the advantage in the deadly game being played across Libya's uplands. Polybius' commendation of their aggressiveness and daring confirms that morale stayed high. It was a contrast to their first expedition a year and a half earlier, which had lost all its spirit of resistance after Hamilcar's and Naravas' victory. Nor would the current contrast please Hamilcar. His own forces suffered losses and at times must have lacked supplies, which had to come either from districts still loyal—wherever they lay—or else from communities coerced by force. In fact, a good deal of the manoeuvring by both sides must have aimed at obtaining supplies and preventing the enemy from obtaining them. But the rebels' goals and Hamilcar's were not automatically the same. All the rebels really needed to do was harass and exhaust the Carthaginians, push them away from the coast and deny them supplies. The army would dwindle, desertions multiply and Hamilcar be cut off from home. A pitched battle was not called for. If one occurred—Spendius and the other generals knew—they would pretty certainly lose it. Hamilcar for these same reasons needed to bring them to bay. In a simple war of attrition, they could afford heavier losses. If he could bring on a battle, he could be confident of victory. Furthermore, he could not afford to retire very far from Carthage, as far for instance as Theveste or even perhaps Sicca. That had been practicable earlier when he had virtual run of the land, but with rebels dogging his heels a lengthy separation from home could be disastrous for morale there. Worse, Spendius might become confident enough to send some units of his own back to join in a fresh assault on Carthage.¹⁰

With both sides needing supplies from the countryside, the struggle most probably ranged through the valleys and over the uplands between the Bagradas, the Siliana and the Mellane. Byzacium is another possible theatre, but less likely given its distance from the rebel heartlands. The north coast, with few settlements between Hippacra's environs and Hippo Regius far to the west (Annaba today), was hardly inviting ground. Nor could the armies afford to campaign for long in largely desert terrain, though they may have moved through desert or semi-desert districts at times. The likeliest result of these aims and needs

¹⁰ Similarly Loreto (1995) 170, 172; though at 167 he sees both sides as reverting to a strategy of attrition.

would be a series of zigzag movements, feints, counterfeints, clashes and skirmishes around the countryside over two months or more, as already suggested. Yet no pitched battles were fought. Polybius writes of ‘full combats’, but he has them take the form either of ‘unexpected ambushes’ or else of panics caused by the sudden appearance of Hamilcar. A set of pitched battles would surely have received more detailed treatment and, more important, would have produced more noteworthy results. Favourable to Hamilcar though the narrative is, it really records on-and-off clashes, occasional ambushes and surprise moves not all of which led to combats. As we have seen, not all were at Hamilcar’s initiative or to his benefit, either.¹¹

After every successful clash Hamilcar, ruthless as ever, slew all prisoners. Not so Spendius and the rebels, as mentioned already. Perhaps they spared their prisoners to encourage the rest of Hamilcar’s men to hope for similar mercy if captured, rather than feel compelled to fight to the uttermost if cornered. Perhaps, too, the rebel army in its breakout had brought only a few slaves from Tunes, so prisoners became useful extra servitors. By contrast, Hamilcar’s savagery could only encourage the rebels to fight on, refusing to surrender, till almost the very end of the campaign.

Polybius climaxes the campaign by revealing Spendius and his men surrounded at The Saw (*Prion*), in a hopeless position, unable to attack or retreat. Somehow Hamilcar had corralled them all and now they lay at his mercy. It is more than mildly irritating that Polybius tells nothing about how this coup was achieved. Besides, his description of the area is one of his sparsest. When they were ‘in a locale unhelpful to their own purposes, but suitable for his own army’, Hamilcar ‘unexpectedly encamped opposite them’ and encircled them with a ditch and palisade. These events and their sequel occurred, we read later, ‘around the place called The Saw; which acquired this name due to the similarity of its appearance to the tool so called.’¹²

¹¹ ‘Full combats’ ἐν τοῖς ὁλοσχερέσι κινδύνοις; ‘unexpected ambushes’, ἐνέδρας ἀνυπονοήτους; and these ambushes plus the panics constitute the ‘combats’, in a μὲν / δέ combination (Pol. 1.84.8); similarly Loreto, 171. By contrast Walbank, *Comm.* 1.147, judges the combats to be battles between both armies entire. But, since both continued sparring afterwards with no result, this is not persuasive.

¹² Rebels trapped: 1.84.9. ‘Suitable for his own army’, (τόποις) εὐφυέσι δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν; similarly Shuckborough and also Pédech (1969) 133; cf. Walbank, 1.147, though he views Paton’s version, ‘favouring his own strong point—generalship’,

What was The Saw, and where? Both questions are much debated. Polybius' words suggest a ridge with a serrated crest. Nepos, Hamilcar's mini-biographer, rather differently describes the rebel forces as 'shut up in narrow terrain'. As usually envisaged, then, The Saw was a sharp-peaked ridge overlooking a pass or valley in which the rebels found themselves trapped, with the Carthaginian forces blocking every exit. The entrapment area had to be fairly large, for the rebels still numbered over 40,000, and in the battle that ended the confrontation Hamilcar was able to make good use of his elephants. In a modified interpretation, the 'Saw' was really a curving chain of peaks, or a roughly circular ridge, surrounding an enclosed plain which the rebels incautiously entered. Eighty or so years earlier, in 321, a Roman consular army had found itself lured into just such a trap in central Italy, the famous Caudine Forks, where it had to capitulate to Samnite foes.¹³

A very different interpretation makes The Saw a man-made crenellated fortification which cut off the rebels' further escape from pursuit. At Sardes in Asia Minor there was indeed a fortification with the same nickname, two decades later, crossing a narrow saddle of ground to link the city with its citadel. Yet this does not fit the rebels' Saw. Nothing suggests this formed part of some town's or fortress's defensive network, or why the rebels should follow a route that ran up against a fortified barrier—not to mention why the barrier was built there in the first place. Besides, such a wall would make sense only if it had high ground on either side (otherwise the rebels could simply walk around it), and that would mean it was in a defile. But The Saw did not overlook a valley or defile.

as another possibility because of 84.6 στρατηγική δύναμις, 'vigour of generalship'. 'Around the place called The Saw': 85.7 περὶ τὸν τόπον τὸν Πρίονα καλούμενον.

¹³ Nepos, *Hamil.* 2.4: rebels 'locorum angustis clausi'. Large valley: Meltzer, 2.384; Loreto (1995) 173–4, 'una grande vallata'. Circle of peaks around level terrain: Gsell, 3.120, citing C. Tissot, *Géographie comparée de la province romaine d'Afrique* 1 (1884) 547 ('[le lieu devait] offrir l'aspect d'une sorte de cirque, plus ou moins ouvert sur quelques points de sa circonférence, mais facile à entourer et à fermer'). Narrow valley: Veith (1912) 546–8, 550–4, and his sheet-map 12, sections *a* and *f*; a larger map in Kromayer & Veith, *SA, Röm. Abt. Blatt* 2, map 7. Cf. Walter (1947) 250, 'étroit défilé'; H. Treidler, *RE* 22.2318–19, s.v. 'Prion', accepting Veith; Huss (1985) 264; Seibert, *FzH*, 103–4 ('Talkessel'). Flaubert, *Salammô*, chap. 14, famously renames the site 'le défilé de la Hache' and applies this description to the ground enclosed by supposed cliffs; this is of course *privilege du romancier*. On the Caudine Forks in 321: E.T. Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites* (Cambridge, 1967) 224–8.

Polybius' evidence, meagre though it is, does not show Hamilcar blocking outlets from an enclosed space, as the Samnites did at the Caudine Forks. He encamped opposite the rebel position, then proceeded to hem it in with a ditch and palisade. Again, as just noted, the later battle on the site must have been on ground broad enough for elephants, and presumably cavalry. Nepos' description of the site as an enclosed space is an over-compressed paraphrase of the conditions—or else (like much else in his brief biography) it misconstrues what he read in his source.¹⁴

Three sites in Tunisia have been suggested. One suggestion, the oldest, is a three-sided valley 95 kilometres south-south-west of Tunes, in a district called the *pagus Gunzuzi* in Roman times. The second puts it between modern Grombalia, at the start of the Cape Bon peninsula, and Hammam Lif on the gulf of Tunis, with the valley itself bounded, on its southern side, by Jebel Ressay—the lofty end of the Zaghuan range—and, on the other side near the sea, by a ridge called Jebel Bou Kournine. But neither suits. Both are narrow valleys; the first is waterless (an important point); and the other not only lies barely 30 kilometres east of Tunis itself, which would make virtually no sense of the events, but—just as important—has no feature at all saw-like.¹⁵

The third and most widely accepted suggestion, dating from the early twentieth century, locates *Prion* a few kilometres inland from the modern town of Hammamet on the east coast, and about 12 kilometres south of Grombalia. This region, just south of Jebel Ressay, is again part of the northern reaches of the Zaghuan range, but on the Byzacium side. In

¹⁴ Crenellated fortification, i.e. saw-like: Pédech (1969) 134 n. 1, 'plutôt une muraille infranchissable contre laquelle Hamilcar accula les mercenaires'; he compares Pol. 7.15.6, describing the wall at Sardes called 'the Saw' (on which cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 2.63).

¹⁵ [i] Tissot's identification—cautiously favoured by Loreto (1995) 177—is a valley well to the south, in *pagus Gunzuzi*, lying between a site named Ain-es-Sif and an ancient one named Muzuc: see *Barrington Atlas*, Plate 32, coordinates 4E. (Confusingly, a Muzuc also appears on the atlas's Plate 33, coordinates 1E, at a spot 5 km. south-west of the previous one.) The ancient town of Limisa lay 6 km. further west (*Barrington Atlas*, Plate 32: coords. 4E), now marked by Byzantine ruins called Ksar Lemsa, 60 km. south-west of Zaghuan (shown on Hallwag Map, *Tunisien Algerien*): H. Dessau, *RE* 25 (1926) 672; Zeinab Benzina ben Abdallah, 'Une cité sufétale d'Afrique proconsulaire: Limisa (Ksar-Lemsa)', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Antiquité*, 102 (1990) 509–515.

[ii] Valley west of Grombalia: Veith records this from a 1906 travel guide, *Collection des Guides-Loanne: Algérie et Tunisie*, but convincingly criticises it, (1912) 549–50. Scullard (1989) 568 still favours it or some other site equally close to ancient Tunes, though noting Veith's thesis (568 n. 17). Jebel Ressay, only 12 km. inland from the gulf of Tunis, reaches 795 metres.

well-watered countryside, by a village called Sidi Jedidi, another three-sided area is bounded on its western side by steep narrow heights, the Jebel Harbi and Jebel Jenane; on its east and north-east by a low ridge called the Argoub Beïda; and—across most of the southern side—by a long, low ridge named Jebel Jedidi, whose many sharp-pointed crests do look saw-like. This identification places the rebels in a camp at the foot of Jebel Jenane, with Hamilcar holding Argoub Beïda and blocking off the exits at the three corners of the tiny plain, and with the final battle fought between the two camps.¹⁶

This terrain does have some topographical appeal, but it again has problems. It may be a subjective point that Jebel Jedidi (teeth and all) seems less striking, at about 150 metres high and a kilometre and a half long, than the steep 350–400-metre Harbi and Jenane ridges, twice its length overall, lying three kilometres to its west and north-west. The strategic issue is more problematic. The area is under 50 kilometres south-east of Tunes as the crow flies, and maybe 70 by road. Hard marching from Tunes could have covered this in two days and a night; and a threat to Hamilcar's rear, even without an actual attack, could have been enough to enable the trapped rebels to escape. Yet Mathos sent no help to his trapped colleagues, though they awaited it. Again, if Spendius and company really were so close to the gulf of Hammamet and towns like Neapolis, Pupput and Thinissut, they were roaming Byzacium and the southern parts of Cape Bon, territories vital to the Punic war-effort. For them to imagine that Hamilcar was remaining far away while they moved into such sensitive country must surprise. And even if they did imagine this, then to let themselves lower their guard so thoroughly is no less surprising, for we have seen that there would be local garrisons and local militias in these regions.¹⁷

A third problem is that this solution, too, involves passes or valleys for Hamilcar to block. Yet Polybius' description suggests otherwise: it indicates that The Saw was the area's most conspicuous physical feature, and says nothing of defiles. Of course this may be due to Polybius compressing his materials. Yet his résumé of the earlier stages of this

¹⁶ Sidi Jedidi and environs, with Jebel Jedidi as The Saw: Veith, 550–4, and sheet-map 12, section *f*; Treidler, *RE* 22.2318–19. Photographs of J. Jedidi, Sidi Jedidi and the plain: Veith, plates facing p. 500.

¹⁷ Walbank, *Comm.* 1.147, objects that Hamilcar's concern was to deprive Tunes of supplies, so neither he nor Spendius can have moved so far to the east. In reality, Hamilcar had had to change his concerns to annihilating the rebel field army and avoiding annihilation by it, so this objection does not hold (cf. Loreto, 177 n. 53).

campaign does mention passes as well as hills when these were rebel objectives. Nor, in fact, does the theory make Jebel Jedidi a key position in events, even though Polybius reports they happened ‘around The Saw’. Instead, it has the events develop under and in front of Jebel Jenane 3 kilometres away across the plain. These objections do not fully rule out identifying Jebel Jedidi as The Saw, but they make it uncertain and implausible. Some other formation, somewhere else in northern Tunisia’s interior, holds the secret of the drama.¹⁸

A possible scenario can be put together. Months of marching, counter-marching and on-and-off fighting brought Spendius and his comrades to the area of The Saw. Plainly they had lost contact with Hamilcar. He may have lured them into supposing that he had turned away to forage elsewhere. With no enemy in sight, the rebels pitched camp. The site must have offered some attractions. Whatever type of feature The Saw was, for instance, it probably seemed a secure one—they could not be approached from behind it. The district had water: Hamilcar used starvation against them, not thirst which would have ended things far more quickly. This, in turn, suggests a region with some cultivation, so that the army on pitching camp could forage for fresh supplies. They may even have rested for some days around The Saw, while Spendius and his fellow-generals discussed where next to move in the struggle with Hamilcar.

Instead Hamilcar found them. No doubt he had been keeping an eye on the army from a distance—Numidian scouts would be hard to detect if they did not want to be detected. Almost certainly the rebels had relaxed their watchfulness (no lookouts, for example, on the crest of The Saw). A night march, it may be guessed, brought him to the spot, and as dawn broke the astonished and alarmed rebels found his army in a camp of its own facing them.

The obvious reaction would have been to march out and attack before the Carthaginians could get properly settled. If they did march out, they were beaten back, but Polybius’ account does not suggest a clash. Not only does he state that the terrain was unhelpful to them while suitable for Hamilcar’s army, but he makes it clear—twice—that throughout the affair they avoided a battle. Hamilcar reduced them to such straits, he writes, that they dared not risk fighting and yet could

¹⁸ ‘At’ or ‘around’ The Saw: *περὶ τὸν τόπον Πρίονα καλούμενον* (quoted above, n. 12). Loreto, 178, renounces any attempt at identification.

not escape. Despite being driven to eat one another, he goes on, ‘they did not venture to march out to combat, because defeat and the punishment of those captured were obvious [if they did]’—implying again their terror of the elephants. Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas, then, kept their men in camp, passively watching the Carthaginians even while these went on to dig a ditch and set up a palisade around them. The ‘palisade’ (*charax*) was probably made of felled trees and bushes, like the one involved in Hanno’s fighting outside Utica two and a half years before, for it is not likely Hamilcar carried around palings and nails on campaign.¹⁹

What caused this paradoxical and disastrous rebel paralysis? Only one factor looks likely: the Punic elephants and cavalry that caused them so much fear. Hamilcar still had 20,000 or more men, despite the recent skirmishes, with elephants and cavalry numerous enough to frighten the rebels. They, when later annihilated, numbered 40,000 according to Polybius. The disparity in strength makes the Carthaginians’ enclosing ditch and palisade all the more remarkable. Quite conceivably these works did not literally surround the enemy. If Spendius and his men had The Saw behind them, retreat over its crests would be difficult or impossible for the army as a whole, although some individuals might risk it. Other individuals might try to escape over open ground elsewhere, but even so would be easy prey for armed and mounted pursuers. Conceivably, parts of the open ground around the position presented obstacles too—rock-falls, ravines, dense thickets, even swampland. The Carthaginians’ ditch and palisade would then close off the accessible perimeter. In literary terms the rebels could still be described as surrounded.²⁰

At The Saw, the rebels had water but limited food. The constantly shifting campaign would have made it hard for either army to keep up a regular supply of provisions, or carry large quantities. Even if some fresh supplies had been obtained, the impasse that followed meant that, as these ran down, they could not be replaced. As noted above, the season was most likely early to mid-summer: in other words, days

¹⁹ Camp outside Utica: Chapter 9 and n. 18.

²⁰ ‘Surrounded’: compare the narrative of the battle of Lake Trasimene, fought along the lake shore, where Polybius describes the Romans as attacked ‘on all sides’ (3.84.1, *πανταχόθεν*; cf. 84.3). It is true that his account there has problems too, for he seems to envisage the fighting as happening in a valley close to the lake; cf. Walbank, *Comm.* 1.415–18; Seibert, *FzH* 221–2.

growing hotter and the nights oppressive. Spendius' men were back in the situation of the whole army during its siege of Carthage. They used up the provisions they had with them. Then they began to starve. Determined to hold out, terrified of their enemies, they began to cannibalise their prisoners, and after them their own slaves.

This situation must have lasted several weeks. Spendius did try to get word out to Tunes. For, as the impasse dragged on, he and his colleagues kept spirits up by promising that help was on its way. In the crowded and increasingly foetid camp alongside The Saw, the troops could soon find out whether a messenger had really left. More than likely, even the generals believed or hoped Mathos would act. Since they made no attempt to break out of the encirclement or seek terms, they either expected to be relieved or accepted that they and their men must die where they were. Obviously there is no reason to suppose the latter. Their troops certainly did not, and Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas could gain little from encouraging them to stand firm and await relief, if they themselves knew none would come. It surely seemed obvious that Mathos could not afford to let the greater part of the rebellion's military strength be lost. It would be just a question of time, everyone reckoned, until his relief column appeared to force Hamilcar to break his grip.

It has been suggested that such a column did in fact march from Tunes, only to be forced to retire. But this is implausible, for it assumes there were no Punic forces at the coast to deter Mathos from weakening his own position by sending help. Again, with his limited forces Hamilcar would have been hard-pressed to detach troops against a relieving expedition and yet keep Spendius' men overawed within their camp. If somehow he did achieve both, it was a masterful feat of generalship, to be extolled by friendly writers afterwards—yet Polybius, himself very friendly to Hamilcar, has no hint of it. We must infer that Mathos did not move.

Facing the impregnable walls of Carthage and the city's defenders, he would have taken an enormous risk in sending off some of his remaining units on a potentially disastrous mission. The defenders of Carthage thus, it seems, played an unsung part in these events. Who commanded in the city we do not know, but the recently-recalled Hanno was there and so was Hamilcar's political ally (and by now son-in-law) Hasdrubal. Both were able organisers and competent if not brilliant military men. Hanno may not have felt very cordial to kinsmen of Hamilcar, but Hasdrubal's winning ways are celebrated. Hanno could put his city's

interests before his own feelings, as he showed later. Some of the old generals in the war with the Romans should have been available too, for instance Adherbal and Carthalo who had held commands only a decade before.²¹

As the weeks wore on, the city's authorities would not only keep the existing garrison in training but could recruit troops abroad to build its strength. Syracuse, Greece and quite possibly Italy were available for this, so long as there were funds. Of course, with the bulk of rebel forces now inland, the city was hardly in danger. For the defenders the challenge was to make sure that the rebels outside continued to be too worried about their own position to detach troops to relieve Spendius. There were various ways to achieve this. They could make, or threaten to make, sorties to harass the rebels' forward posts and patrols. They could launch seaborne raids against the coasts north and east of Tunes to harass the enemy further and throw them into repeated alarms, just as Carthalo and then Hamilcar had once done to Italy's coasts. If they were building up forces in the city, they might even succeed in sending some via Cape Bon or Byzacium to strengthen Hamilcar on campaign, and would not fail to let the enemy learn of it. To be sure, we are not told of any such activities, thanks to Polybius' focus on Hamilcar. But our only alternative is to imagine the besieged and their besiegers both going about their separate affairs week by week and month after month, each ignoring the other, while the confrontation in their hinterland moved to its climax.²²

For the trapped rebels a moment came when, 'coerced by hunger, they were forced to eat one another'. As mentioned earlier, Polybius' explanation is that they dared not try a breakout or, because of their crimes, to seek terms. Instead they hung on, looking to Tunes for rescue. The soldiers did not, of course, kill one another for food: Polybius clarifies that 'they impiously used up their prisoners, using them as food, and used up the bodies of their slaves, but no one came from Tunes to their relief.' He leaves unsaid how much time had passed by now, but it must have been many weeks. Earlier they would have eaten the provi-

²¹ Rebels sent word to Tunes: so too Huss (1985) 264 n. 92; Loreto, 174). Loreto infers a relief force was then 'intercettato e costretto a ritirarsi', for he does not believe that another Punic army was available near Tunes to restrain Mathos. On Adherbal, Carthalo and other veteran generals cf. Chapter 3.

²² Cf. Chapter 11 n. 3 for later sources' reports that the Romans allowed Italian mercenaries to be hired, once the traders' affair was settled (App. *Sic.* 2.10; Zon. 8.17.9). There is no reason to assume it was a one-off concession.

sions they had with them, and the generals must have tried to ration these for as long as possible. The rebels were hardly squeamish, but to become cannibals was to break a universally powerful inhibition—an impious act, as Polybius notes. It is a uniquely graphic illustration of how desperate and how determined they were.

It is still baffling that they would keep themselves alive on such food and yet make no effort to break out. We might wonder what public torments Hamilcar inflicted on individuals caught trying to slip away or messengers captured trying to reach Tunes. He knew of Gisco's fate, and the spirit of vengeance had long possessed him. What he may have done would not be something for Polybius to harp on. Meanwhile the Carthaginian forces simply held the ring closed, not wasting lives in an assault. Clearly Hamilcar felt assured that he could afford to wait. Victory at The Saw would end any last hope that the Libyans and the mercenaries still had of victory.²³

The catastrophic situation in the rebel camp led to unrest. Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas, and their lieutenants, had kept their men under control only through promising that relief would arrive. Now not only was hope of this lessening but so was the human food supply. Predictably enough, the men blamed the generals for their plight. Spendius and his colleagues were confronted with physical threats—and, no less than Hamilcar, both they and the rank and file remembered the fate of Gisco and his fellows. From here, events moved swiftly.²⁴

Someone was chosen as a herald and sent out to Hamilcar. The irony must have been keen for the Carthaginian general: these were the same rebels who had promised a torture-death to any herald sent to them. But of course he listened to their message. The generals and their immediate subordinates were requesting permission to come to him for talks. This could only mean capitulation. Polybius writes that the rebel leaders sent the herald because they had 'decided to hand themselves over to the enemy and discuss a settlement with Hamilcar'. In effect, they offered to cross into his lines in person, thus putting

²³ Pol. 1.84.9 ('coerced by hunger'), 85.1 ('they impiously used up their prisoners'); the translated repetitions, 'used up' and 'using', match those in Polybius. Nepos, *Hamil.* 2.4, avers that more rebels perished from hunger ('fame') than battle ('ferro'), and Loreto would like to believe this ((1995) 175), but it looks like a touch of rhetoric. In any case, it is not advisable to prefer Nepos' unsupported remark against Polybius' more circumstantial account. On the taboo of cannibalism, cf. Pol. 9.24.6–7; other comments in (e.g.) Thucydides 2.70.1–2; Josephus, *Bell. Iud.* 6.3.3–5 = 6.193–219.

²⁴ Unrest and physical threats: Pol. 1.85.2.

themselves at his mercy. Not only Spendius, Autaritus and Zarzas would go but also their seven chief lieutenants, the entire high command of the army—unarmed, it seems. No attendants are mentioned, though Polybius might well take them for granted. Technically the leaders went for talks alone, not to surrender as a trade-off for the release or even for just the lives of their men. Had it been a trade-off, the talks would have been unnecessary. Yet for the leadership of the trapped army to put themselves into Hamilcar's hands shows either naivety scarcely credible in men like Spendius and the hardbitten Autaritus—or else that they were already resigned to becoming sacrificial victims for the army's safety.²⁵

The discussions cannot have been lengthy. Leaving the rank and file leaderless in camp indicates that their generals expected a quick result. At most Spendius and his colleagues spent a night in the Punic camp; we shall see other indications that the talks were not over in one afternoon. But even if the leaders wanted to haggle, they were in no position to. Hamilcar would merely need to wait a while longer to let sickness and death spread through their men. Yet, maybe to their surprise, they found him willing to grant quite humane terms. It went without saying that their men would have to hand over all their weapons. But then all could walk away, each man 'with his tunic' (again, just like the Romans trapped in the Caudine Forks), except for ten whom Hamilcar would select to keep as prisoners.²⁶

This capitulation covered the army at The Saw alone. Polybius writes of Spendius and his colleagues discussing 'a settlement' with the Carthaginian general, and then refers to the capitulation as both an 'agreement' and indeed a 'treaty'. But it is hard to imagine what other language he could use, unless some elaborate circumlocution. In no way was it an agreement ending the rebellion. Spendius and company had no authority to bind Mathos and the men at Tunes, or rebel towns like Utica and Hippacra. Mathos was probably not even consulted, for that would have required Hamilcar's permission to send a message, which it was in his plain interest not to allow. Still, in practical terms he surely

²⁵ 1.85.2–3. Entire high command: 85.5, 'Autaritus, Spendius and the other leading commanders'. Loreto (1995) 175 holds that the rebels were still strong enough to make Hamilcar negotiate terms rather than impose unconditional surrender or risk battle. Yet the terms, and the entire high command's readiness to put themselves in his hands, amounted virtually to surrender; nor is it certain that Hamilcar was playing fair (so too Meltzer, 2.384; de Sanctis, 3.1.381, 'punica scaltrezza'; Walbank, *Comm.* 1.147).

²⁶ 'With his tunic', μετὰ χιτῶνος (1.85.4). Possibly this meant a spare tunic, i.e. besides the one being worn.

calculated that this surrender would mortally wound the whole rebellion. With the main army gone, he could expect Libya to be overawed and Mathos' remnant at Tunes to be doomed.²⁷

Letting men go with only the clothes they had on was not a promise that all would reach home. Some would have little if any money. None would have weapons. Hamilcar was not likely to provide them with more than a minimum of fresh supplies—if even that—or allow loyal towns to assist passing bands of ex-rebels. In a countryside convulsed by years of warfare, bandits and deserters would menace them as they tried to find their way home or to Tunes. So too would other comrades unscrupulously desperate for their own survival. In other words the offer from Hamilcar was laden with risks. But it was all they could get. As for whom Hamilcar would choose as his ten prisoners, Spendius and his nine colleagues surely had no illusions. Taking ten miscellaneous company-commanders, cavalry officers or rank-and-file men would be pointless. Before him stood the ten who were the high command of the trapped army. No one, least of all they, could be surprised when he stated that he chose them.

What happened next was dramatic—though again Polybius compresses his account. The rebel troops learned that their commanders were under arrest, but not that an agreement had been made. They supposed treachery was afoot against them and armed themselves for battle. Too late: the initiative had passed to Hamilcar. 'Surrounding them with his elephants and the rest of his army, he annihilated them all.' Polybius plainly wants it to seem a simple misunderstanding—the rebels act on incomplete and mistaken information, and it is they who take up arms and virtually force battle on Hamilcar. But detaining Spendius and the other nine was part of the agreement, so how did the rebel soldiery learn of the one without the other? If they were really the first to seize arms, why did they wait to be attacked, as Polybius implies? And since Hamilcar already had them penned in with ditch and palisade—which, to be effective, had to be guarded—what exactly did 'surrounding them' with elephants and troops now amount to?²⁸

²⁷ 'A settlement' (περὶ διαλύσεως), 85.2; 'agreement' (ὁμολογίας), 85.4, 85.5; 'treaty' (συνθήκας), 85.6. A general capitulation covering the whole rebel movement, and prompted by a still-existing peace faction: Loreto, 175–6.

²⁸ Terms of the agreement, arrest of the generals: Pol. 1.85.4–5. Rebels' reaction and annihilation: 85.6–7. 'Surrounding them [&c.]' (85.7), περιστήσας αὐτοῖς τὰ τε θηρία καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν δύναμιν.

As noted earlier, Spendius and his colleagues may not have crossed the lines quite on their own. If they took some personal slaves as attendants (supposing these had not been eaten) or junior officers, ignored by Polybius, one or more could afterwards be sent back to report to their troops. Yet the troops heard only about the arrest of their leaders, not about the capitulation. Is the solution, instead, that the leaders had not in fact expected such a demand, and an aide now rushed back to the rebel camp crying treachery? Unlikely again, for the fact that the leaders had put themselves all together into Hamilcar's power implies (as we saw) that some such outcome was predictable. They themselves may have been signalling it as the only way to save their men. Did Hamilcar detain everyone who had come, only for an aide of Spendius' to escape and tell the rebel army that their leaders had been treacherously seized? That is possible but needs a string of assumptions. A more sinister explanation, closer to Polybius' evidence, is likely.²⁹

Before the leaderless rebels could break out of their entrapment, they found themselves confronted by enemy troops and elephants. This is the clear import of Polybius' account. Hamilcar's men, then, were waiting to strike. Certainly the whole Punic army had not been spread out—its elephants and cavalry least of all—along the full reach of the ditch and palisade ever since the start of the blockade. That would not only have been a dangerous dispersal of strength, but would not fit the report of Hamilcar *now* surrounding the rebels 'with his elephants and the rest of his army'. It would have been reasonable to have some of his forces patrolling the enceinte while the rest were held in tactical reserve in camp. Now, to launch the attack, all were deployed. Polybius' phrase may be his own indication of this, or else be a survival from the source he was compressing. Hamilcar had his troops moving to face the rebels before the rebels themselves reacted—if he had not put his men into position earlier. For instance, if he had managed to keep Spendius and the others overnight in his camp before putting his terms to them, he could position the Punic army under cover of darkness.

The dénouement makes further sense if Hamilcar himself now arranged for the word of Spendius' and his fellows' arrest to reach the rebels. A pretended deserter, or a slave promised his freedom in return

²⁹ Loreto, 176, properly asking how the rebel army learned of the arrests, surmises that an attendant escaped without knowing the terms agreed on, thus prompting confusion and panic among the rebels. But it is not easy to account for such selective ignorance, nor does this take the other evidence into consideration.

for acting—or even a shouted message from the Punic camp—would be enough. Nor was it just treachery from Hamilcar that the anxious and starving thousands around The Saw might fear, for a suspicion might easily arise that their leaders had deserted in return for their own lives. Why had they all gone over in a body? Who might defect next—the middle and junior officers, the only ones left to lead the demoralised troops? Polybius describes the men as ‘believing that they had been betrayed’, and they need not have had only Hamilcar in mind.³⁰

Even without such suspicions, the rebel chain of command was shattered. Hamilcar gave no time to repair it. His men now crossed the barricades to corner the enemy in and around their camp, or waited outside to cut them down as they struggled through or scrambled over the obstacles. The vast slaughter suggests that the fighting was in a fairly confined space, which points to the former. Naravas’ cavalry and the elephants, in turn, would be best used for hunting down men who evaded the killing-field. If some rebels were captured, their end was no doubt the same as for earlier prisoners: under the feet of the elephants. The rebel expeditionary army, still 40,000 strong according to Polybius, was obliterated.³¹

Polybius wants to present Hamilcar as blameless for the rebel debacle, and many moderns agree. But it is difficult to absolve him of opportunism, if not double-dealing. True, both sides had played for high stakes. When the rebel generals and their divisional chiefs all left camp together, it virtually announced to their trapped army that some kind of capitulation was on the way. Even then, some of the men would start wondering how many Hamilcar would allow to return. Suspicion and alarm, as just noted, could easily follow. Had Hamilcar wanted to honour the terms agreed on, he could have defused tensions by sending over a messenger—it would not have been dangerous to let go one of the seven lieutenants—or having a letter handed over at a picket (or even tied to a spear and hurled into the camp, as Caesar once did in Gaul). Polybius offers no hint of any such effort, even though it would have suited his characterisation of the rebels: first forced by circumstances

³⁰ ‘Believed that they had been betrayed’, νομισάντων αὐτοὺς παρεσπονδῆσθαι (1.85.6).

³¹ Loreto (1995) 176–7 argues that, for Hamilcar to surround them with his forces, the rebels must have come out from their already-surrounded camp; the elephants, and therefore the cavalry too, then did the encircling. This ignores that it involved ‘the rest of the army’ (τὴν λοιπὴν δύναμιν), not just the cavalry.

to seek terms, then receiving bearable ones, only to revert at the last moment to savage folly. Instead, he shows them unaware of any terms and convinced they had been betrayed, a rational enough explanation for rushing to arms. We have to infer that his source or sources did not report Hamilcar trying to inform them fully. All that could later be done, by the sources or Polybius himself, was to minimise the deliberate preparations for a coup.³²

Hamilcar, in other words, judged it unsafe to release even a disarmed rebel army. Too many able-bodied fighters might reach their homes—or worse, Tunes. Much better to annihilate them, preferably keeping his own casualties low. It was an obvious stratagem to decapitate the army by seizing its chiefs, then attack before it could reorganise effective leadership. The Persians had tried this against the Ten Thousand Greeks in 399, though unsuccessful in their follow-up. Caesar would do it better in Gaul, dealing with unwanted immigrant Germans: he seized their leaders when they came to him as envoys and then massacred the unsuspecting people, nearly half a million of them on his own estimate. Morality did not come into Hamilcar's calculation. As his no-quarter policy already showed, he judged the rebels unfit for the ordinary conventions of warfare after their treatment of Gisco and his companions. He would do whatever it took to destroy them and crush the rebellion. From this viewpoint he could reckon that his stratagem had succeeded excellently. It now remained to deal with Mathos.³³

³² Hamilcar's good faith defended by Loreto, 176, rejecting the notion of treachery ('in realtà per ciò manca ogni base') and seeing him as following a renewed 'politica di pacificazione'; but cf. Hoyos' review (1999), section on 'Hamilcar'. Message hurled on a spear: Caesar, *BGall.* 5.48.

³³ Ten Thousand Greeks losing their generals: Chapter 7 n. 14. Caesar and the Germans in 55: *BGall.* 4.13–15; for other sources see M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman* (6th edn., Eng. tr.: Oxford, 1969) 176–7; cf. Meier (1995) 278–9.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE CROSSES AT TUNES

Spendius, Autaritus, Zarzas and their lieutenants were kept alive. They were treated poorly, no doubt, but Hamilcar's plans for them did not involve the elephants. Instead the hapless rebel leaders now went with his army in its next manoeuvres.

Once more the Carthaginians in three divisions, under Hamilcar, Hannibal and Naravas with his cavalry, marched through the countryside, accepting or forcing submissions from the locals. It is reasonable to suppose that not many had to be forced, 'with the Libyans changing sides and going over to them because of the success that had occurred'. With the main rebel forces destroyed, all that remained—besides Mathos' troops at Tunes—would be local militia units and, in places, garrisons of regular rebel soldiers (Polybius mentions such garrisons later on). Few of the local militias can have had stomach for further intransigence. Thus 'most of the towns' came under Punic control. This was a striking contrast to Hamilcar's first inland campaign, when he had had to use force most of the time. But even now not all of rebel Libya changed sides. Utica and Hippacra did not, nor is it likely that the victorious march swept over the whole of the interior, which would have taken months. It covered the countryside between The Saw and Tunes—most likely the Bagradas valley and some of the region between that river, the Siliana and the Mellane.¹

Mathos' forces at Tunes were the vital target. News of the disaster cannot have come as a total surprise to him, even if he had continued to hope that Spendius might somehow still manage to fight his way out. Mathos surely recognised that the rebellion was now doomed, and he with it. It was only a question of time before Hamilcar's victorious divisions would appear on the hills and plains behind Tunes. The rebels

¹ Pol. 1.86.2 (quoted). The idea that Hannibal took charge of Spendius and his confrères (n. 3 below) has nothing to recommend it. Rebel garrisons in Libyan towns later: 87.7. 'With the Libyans changing sides', &c.: προσχωρούντων δὲ καὶ μετατιθεμένων πρὸς αὐτοὺς τῶν Λιβύων. Loreto (1995) 174, 181–2, supposes that the Carthaginians marched on Tunes from the south.

could, in theory, have abandoned their positions to seek safety elsewhere—at Utica and Hippacra, for instance. Instead they stayed where they were. Not because Hamilcar arrived too quickly and forestalled them, for he was spending time in the interior, restoring it to obedience. Nor is it likely that the defenders of Carthage would have been able to stop them, or willing to try. Essentially, there was nowhere safe for the rebels to go. Utica was nearby but was too small to accommodate an army probably still 20,000 or more strong; to march for Hippacra meant risking an attack spearheaded by Naravas and his dreaded horsemen. In the opposite direction lay the Cape Bon peninsula and Byzacium, dangerous ground both. Remaining in position around Tunes offered some advantages. The seaward side offered access to any venturesome merchants still prepared to risk Punic naval patrols and bring in some supplies. By land, the town could not be surrounded by an army the size of Hamilcar's, with the salt-marsh of Sebkhet Sijoumi on the western side and hills edging it to the north, west and south. Polybius afterwards notes the roughness of some of this country, which impeded Hamilcar from going to the rescue of his colleague.

With the rebel disaster at The Saw happening in August, 238, or thereabouts, the victors' sweep through Libya to the coast can be estimated at another few weeks. To leave Mathos and the last rebel troop concentration untroubled much longer, say for several months, made little sense. From the Carthaginian viewpoint, Carthage remained under potential threat from the desperate men at Tunes; or, on the other hand, these might use a long respite to slip away elsewhere to carry on the fight. Hamilcar and Hannibal came up to Tunes, it may be estimated, around the start of October.

'On the Carthage side [of Tunes] Hannibal encamped,' Polybius writes, 'and Hamilcar on the side opposite to this.' It is often supposed that the rebels' camp lay on the Parc du Belvedere heights overlooking Tunes—like the army of Sicily's probable camp at the start of the war—and Hannibal fortified his camp on the plain to the east, between them and Carthage. Yet if so, Hamilcar's own choice of station, on Tunes' south side, is harder to explain. Tunes would have had only a small garrison, easily masked. He too could have taken up a more effective position north of the town, between the rebel camp and the Sebkhet Sijoumi salt-marsh, threatening the Belvedere on its western side.

More likely the hills were not now defended, and Mathos had withdrawn his forces into Tunes. Against experienced troops, including

Naravas' cavalry, and the elephants he may well have wanted stronger walls than a camp's. Without reported opposition Hannibal could march to take up station, most probably, on the Belvedere heights. He would have some cavalry—citizens and mercenaries—and possibly some elephants. His division was protected by a palisade but, even so, the high ground would obviously be a securer site than the coastal plain to its east. The ensuing execution of Spendius and his comrades was, in turn, carried out close to Tunes' walls on Hannibal's side, and the bodies were then left there. Hamilcar himself encamped on the opposite side of the town, where he could use the low hills and flat ground between the salt-marsh and the sea. With him he no doubt kept Naravas and his Numidians.²

These Punic dispositions were largely dictated by the topography, which must have seemed favourable anyway. The two generals could bring pressure to bear on both of Tunes' accessible sides. It looks as though the aim was to repeat their entrapment of Spendius' army, with Carthage and the gulf of Tunis taking the place of The Saw feature as barriers to a rebel escape. To block any breakout through the two or three valleys between the semicircling hills, Hamilcar could keep some of Naravas' cavalrymen on patrol. Polybius' succinct report does not mention them, but otherwise Hamilcar would be leaving the enemy a possible—even if perilous—escape-gap open, when he wanted to demoralise them into surrender.

Any alternative strategy would have been equally problematic. For instance, a united attack on Tunes solely from the narrow southern approaches could well have been beaten back, risking heavy losses. So too one from the north—or the rebels might then flee south to the Zaghuan mountains, to break out into the barely-reconquered Libyan interior or to whatever friendly centres they still had in Byzacium, there to renew the fight (this in fact did eventually happen, after Punic strategy changed). All the same this blockade was risky. Though his numbers were only about equal to the rebels', he was dividing them around a

² 'On the Carthage side', &c.: Pol. 1.86.3; and 86.5 for the palisade (τῷ χάρακι). Gsell, 3.121 n. 4, Lancel (1992) 41, and Loreto, 182, sensibly locate Hannibal on the Belvedere heights. Veith (1912) 554–55 and Map 12, keeps Mathos encamped on Belvedere and puts Hannibal a short distance to the north-east (roughly where the Cité Olympique stands). But elsewhere Veith plants Hannibal on the next hill to the north-west (Kromayer & Veith, *SA*, Römische Abteilung, Map 2.8). Pédech (1969) 135 n. 2 places him on the shore of the inner gulf of Tunis, now the enclosed basin of El Bahira.

united enemy. They could stay in fairly swift contact by water with each other and Carthage; but for one division to rejoin the other overland would mean a 25-kilometre march. Hamilcar was relying on the rebels' fear of Naravas' men and the elephants. He plainly had no intention of launching attacks: demoralisation by blockade was to do the work. So, with the camps established, he began with an act calculated to strike horror into every man at Tunes.

'They [Hamilcar and Hannibal] brought forward Spendius and the other prisoners to the walls and crucified them in full view.' Hamilcar came over to Hannibal's camp to do this, as we shall see. He took the doomed men with him, for it is not likely he had given them into Hannibal's charge when the two divisions separated to their different camps. The place of crucifixion was very likely the ground between Tunes' northern walls and Hannibal's camp. The coastland on Hamilcar's side no doubt offered less visibility. Inflicting the crucifixions outside Hannibal's camp allowed observers from Carthage, too, to come and watch—an important morale-booster for the citizens. Quite likely again, the deaths were preceded by torturing and mutilating all ten men, to match what they had done to Gisco and his companions. Hamilcar's own bitterness at that massacre, as well as his aim of demoralising the rebels, could certainly prompt such treatment, and we may note how Mathos later inflicted torments on Hannibal as well as crucifixion, in revenge for the deaths.³

The crosses with their dead were left for wind, rain and birds to ravage. Hamilcar went back to his camp. Both he and Hannibal may well have expected this stroke to complete the enemy's despair; even if Mathos refused to give in, his own men might finally turn on him to avert annihilation. They reckoned without the Libyan's leadership qualities and his soldiers' commitment. The bulk of his army must now have consisted of Libyans recruited since the outbreak of the revolt. Their loyalty could now focus only on Mathos. The remaining survivors of the original army of Sicily—a couple of thousand, at the best estimate—were bound to him by years of comradeship and

³ 'They brought forward Spendius [&c.]', 86.4 (προσαγαγόντες... ἐσταυρώσαν). Diod. 25.5.2 mentions only Hamilcar; Loreto (182 n. 14) implausibly judges this, not as Diodorean précis, but as proof of a different, more accurate source. He thinks, implausibly again, that the choice of execution-site 'è forse dovuto al fatto contingente che questi [Hannibal] aveva la custodia dei prigionieri', following Meltzer, 2.384 (cf. n. 1). Veith, 555, also entrusts the captive chiefs to Hannibal, ascribing to him and not Hamilcar the 'taunt' ('den Spaß') of the crucifixions.

shared crimes. Nor did Hamilcar even now offer any encouragement to defectors. Instead, the crosses outside Tunes were a renewed signal that it was war to the death. Mathos could rely on his troops for a new blow at their tormentors.

Hamilcar, holding lower ground and without close access to Carthage, kept his camp on alert against a possible sortie. His colleague was less on guard, for Polybius reports Mathos 'observing that Hannibal was behaving carelessly and over-confidently'. This censorious comment recalls the one on Hanno the Great at the war's outset, as a good organiser but as 'handling affairs overall inexpertly and sluggishly'. The critical tone of both comments can be expected from a historian who views Hamilcar as head and shoulders above his fellows. Hannibal probably had fewer troops than his effective superior, if only on the expectation that he could draw on the garrison in Carthage, should need arise. At the very most he would have had only half of the whole army. A surprise attack, then, by most of the rebel forces might well find him at a disadvantage. Yet a well-handled force in a fortified camp should be able to hold its own against a larger enemy—at least long enough for help to arrive. Hannibal's was to put up, it seems, minimal resistance. Even if Polybius overstates his carelessness so as to clear Hamilcar of any blame for the debacle, the criticism must still have a basis in what happened. Carelessness would, in practice, mean poor patrolling and casual sentry-keeping, maybe even loose discipline among the men. They must have felt secure within their palisade, buoyed by assuming that the rebels had been cowed for good, and perhaps too by the nearness of Carthage.⁴

It may have taken one or two days for Mathos to observe this, but not longer. With sizeable forces—around dawn would be a good time, while Hannibal's disorderly camp was waking up—he struck. Victory was quick and complete. The palisade was overrun; Hannibal's troops were cut down, driven out of the camp, or captured, and 'all the baggage' seized. What this baggage was we are not told, but we can surmise it included armour and weapons. A surprise assault would leave the camp's occupants little time to arm themselves properly. The classic example was to be Scipio Africanus' night attack on the Punic

⁴ Criticism of Hannibal, Pol. 1.86.5; of Hanno earlier, 74.2 (with different phrasing; cf. Chapter 9 n. 11). De Sanctis, 3.1.383, judges the disaster 'imputabile in massima ad Amilcare'; so too Seibert, *FzH* 104–5, criticising Hamilcar for not foreseeing and guarding against a rebel attack.

and Numidian camps outside Utica, thirty-five years later, which caught their troops helplessly asleep: the camps were fired, the men massacred or captured, and huge quantities of weaponry taken. In Hannibal's camp food, pack-animals, wagons and maybe the pay-chest would be other items welcome to the rebels. To crown Mathos' success, Hannibal himself was captured.

So too, it seems, were 'thirty of the most distinguished Carthaginians'. At all events Mathos soon put thirty such men to death with Hannibal. It is not very likely that they were surviving companions of Gisco or prisoners from earlier campaigns, kept at Tunes all this time. Implausible, too, is a suggestion that they were the Carthaginian senate's inner council of Thirty. Polybius does not suggest this even though, had he been able to, it would have hugely heightened the horror and symbolism of Mathos' act. In any case it is hard to see why The Mighty Ones' entire inner council should go out as a body to consult with Hannibal or to look at the rebel chiefs on their crosses. Rather, some of the thirty prisoners would be well-born officers of Hannibal's division, the others senior visitors to his camp—senators, members of pentarchies, and perhaps priests—who had come to view and report on the collection of putrefying crucified. Scipio's coup in 203 likewise ensnared many Carthaginian aristocrats: no doubt including senior officers in the Punic camp, but also eleven senators from the city (he had been negotiating a possible peace-agreement).

With word of the disaster still on its way to Hamilcar, Mathos took down the dead rebels from their crosses for burial and enacted a scene even more macabre than Hamilcar's crucifixions. The wretched Hannibal was brought to the site and put through brutal torments, finally to be fixed still breathing to Spendius' cross. We can safely suppose that, for the rebels, he was the nearest substitute at hand for Hamilcar himself. Then Spendius' body was laid out for funeral rites, the thirty Carthaginian captives placed around it, and all of them slain. 'Fortune,' Polybius comments in rather academic fashion, 'as though in a deliberate comparison, was giving both sides in turn opportunities for the extreme in reciprocal punishment.'⁵

⁵ Capture of Hannibal's camp and ensuing executions: Pol. 1.86.5–6 ('all the baggage', τῆς ἀποσκευῆς ἀπάσης). Loreto, 183, unconvincingly supposes the rebels were inferior in numbers to Hannibal's corps. Carthage's council of Thirty put to death: Meltzer, 2.40–41, 385; Huss (1985) 462 n. 42 (contrast 265 n. 99); Gómez (1996) 308.

Fortune had been aided by Hamilcar's tactical arrangements for the blockade, which made it impossible for either division to reinforce the other in time against sudden attack. Nor, it seems, did he and Hannibal make any use of Punic naval resources for putting pressure on Tunes. He did not even try an attack of his own against the town when he learned of Mathos' sortie, though Mathos can have left only reduced forces to defend it. No doubt the town-fortifications looked too hazardous. Yet the chosen strategy could have worked, had Hannibal kept better guard. Hamilcar has been blamed for not taking proper precautions; but his chief faults were to persist in his policy of frightfulness, and to have a less than first-class fellow-general to rely on. Had Mathos not been offered temptation by a careless enemy, and provocation by the crucifixions, the Punic blockade would have been tightened—eventually, perhaps, even by sea—and reinforcements brought in for both divisions. The methods used at The Saw could then have been pressed to success.

Polybius indicates that Hamilcar did take steps to send or take help to his colleague, but it could not reach Hannibal in time. 'Barca was late in learning of the attack by those from the town, because of the distance between the camps; when he did learn, he could not rush aid forward owing to the difficult terrain intervening.' But with Hannibal's troops dead or routed, his own position between the salt-marsh and the sea became untenable. Mathos' men, some re-equipped with Hannibal's stores, now outnumbered his. Hamilcar had to reckon that they would not return quietly to being blockaded in Tunes. Despite their spectacular new victory, holding on there was a rebel dead end, for they could not prevent any reinforcements from reaching Hamilcar, nor risk attacking Carthage. The victory, and the fresh supplies it brought in, offered them a last chance to break free.⁶

Mathos' realistic choices were either to attack Hamilcar's seasoned troops or to move away. One obvious recourse was to march north over the hills to Utica, which like Hippacra was still in the revolt. With nearly half the Punic army pulverised, the risks of such a move were lessened though not neutralised. Some or all of the rebel troops in the northern towns could be drawn on for reinforcements, to give

Loreto, 184, sees all 30 as Hannibal's officers. Scipio's attack on the camps in 203: Livy 30.3–6. 'Fortune, as though' &c.: Pol. 1.86.7.

⁶ 'Barca was late in learning' &c.: Pol. 1.86.8 ('could not rush aid forward', οὐδ' οὕτως κατετάξει τὴν βοήθειαν).

Mathos a fighting chance of then retiring inland to stir up Libya anew. Or—a much more desperate alternative—retiring to Utica or Hippacra might bring an opportunity for flight by sea, for instance to Sardinia. Sardinia had by now become more inhospitable, for the natives there had banded together to attack and expel the mutineer mercenaries, but Mathos could have reckoned on taking enough troops to overcome any opposition.

Rather than withdraw into camp and face Mathos' now superior numbers, Hamilcar decided to move. He likewise had two alternatives: evacuate by sea to Carthage (if shipping could be had), or relocate elsewhere to preserve at least some strategic freedom. The first was unthinkable. It would leave the republic in the same position as when the war began, but at risk now of fraying to breaking-point the goodwill of Hiero, the Romans and, indeed, even the friendly Numidians. Hamilcar's reaction to the loss of Hannibal's division points to his expecting a northward enemy move. He struck camp, marched around the salt-marsh and hills, and made for the mouth of the Bagradas.

This was not the foolish act it has occasionally been judged. Certainly he left the way open to the south for the rebels, but—given the situation—that was the lesser evil. Until he could rally what was left of Hannibal's division and, better still, receive some reinforcements from Carthage, it was obviously unwise to come to blows with Mathos. It was equally inadvisable to re-blockade Tunes from the north, even by calling out troops from Carthage. That would only invite another debacle, especially as they would no doubt have to encamp on the coastal plain, with Mathos now controlling the Belvedere heights. Transferring the Punic army northwards, by contrast, re-established contact with Carthage just as it shut off Utica and Hippacra from Mathos. The one risk was that Mathos might be able to entrap the army between the forces from Tunes and those from Utica and Hippacra. Hamilcar decided to risk it.⁷

⁷ Insurgents expelled from Sardinia, probably late in 238: 1.75.5, 88.8; Hoyos (2000) 374. Hamilcar's march northward: 1.86.9. For Meltzer, 2.385, and Loreto (1995) 186, this was to cut Mathos off from Utica and Hippacra—a mistake, in Loreto's view, because it reopened inland Libya to the rebels. For Gsell, 3.122 n. 2 (followed by Walbank, *Comm.* 1.148, and Huss (1985) 265 n. 100), Hamilcar aimed simply at protecting his communications with Carthage and inland Libya. For Veith (1912) 556, it was to prevent Carthage being cut off from the interior again. Seibert, *FzH* 105 n. 92, sees Hamilcar's reaction as confused ('kopflos'), exposing his army to entrapment from Tunes and Utica. He assumes that Hamilcar did nothing about the bridge.

From his camp to the mouth of the Bagradas was a 35-kilometre journey. The army must have spent a day's hard marching to reach the site, or at least to cover the 26 kilometres as far as the bridge over the river near La Sebbala. From Tunes the rebels were a mere 15 kilometres or so from the same bridge, yet Hamilcar reached the area without opposition. They made no effort to attack him on the march for, although they outnumbered him, he had his elephants and Naravas. If any of Mathos' subordinates urged him to attack, they were overruled—and, if necessary, dealt with in the standard manner. The rebels thereby lost their last chance to take back the strategic initiative.

We must assume that Hamilcar put a strong guard at the Bagradas bridge. Polybius does not mention it, but the historian is clearly hurrying now to finish the story, despite its continuing twists and turns. He compresses all ensuing events, from Hamilcar arriving at the Bagradas' mouth until the final battle, into a single page. The crucial importance of the bridge had been shown in the early stages of the war, and Hamilcar did not know that Mathos would not come north. To leave the bridge for possible rebel use would have been an oversight too blatant for even a second-rate commander. A force of a few thousand men on the northern side, with cavalry and some of the terrible elephants, should have been enough to hold it, while the rest of Hamilcar's army (at a rough estimate, now some 7,000–8,000 strong) encamped nine kilometres away at the river-mouth.

All these events, dramatic as they were, need have occupied only a week. Setting up and fortifying their camps, and firming up contacts with Carthage, would take Hamilcar and Hannibal two or three days at most. Then the public execution of Spendius and his colleagues followed surely only a day or two later, for nothing like an offer of talks or an armed clash preceded and the crucifixions were meant to have a powerful impact. Nor was Mathos in turn slow to retaliate. After that, with Hannibal shattered, Hamilcar's evacuation to the Bagradas could not be long delayed, for the obvious reasons already explored. He arrived there, it may be calculated, sometime in mid-October.

From there he re-established communication with Carthage. He could also rally survivors of Hannibal's division, for these would have fled east toward the city or north toward the river. Whatever their numbers, even if only two or three thousand came in, they would improve his strength. There were other advantages, too, in holding the lower reaches of the river. He could keep watch for rebel communications from Tunes to Utica by both land and sea (not that there could be

many by sea, for messenger-craft would have to sail out past Carthage). And were Mathos and his men to venture northwards, they would not only face the corps presumably holding the bridge but, to their right, find Hamilcar with the rest of his army swinging down from the river-mouth onto their flank.

Hamilcar had salvaged a near-disaster. To win the war, though, more had to be done—some of it unpalatable to him perhaps, but essential.⁸

⁸ For the Bagradas shallows see Chapter 10 n. 7.

CHAPTER TWENTY

HAMILCAR AND HANNO

Mathos' decision not to attack Hamilcar at the Bagradas was arguably a mistake. With around 20,000 men still in arms (some of them re-equipped from Hannibal's baggage) against Hamilcar's 10,000–12,000, a breakthrough might have been forced in the teeth of all the dangers. Instead, the only course left was to abandon Tunes and head for the countryside in the opposite direction.

We are not told whether this happened immediately. Polybius ignores rebel doings over the next days or weeks to focus on Hamilcar and the Carthaginians. 'When the unexpected defeat [of Hannibal] was announced to them, the Carthaginians again suffered grief and despair. After recently recovering their spirits, they fell once more out of hope.' The blow to their fortunes could not be disguised, even though Hamilcar had pulled some irons out of the fire. All the same, the description of alarm and despair in the city is partly a literary device for emphasising the situation. Many citizens surely did feel such emotions, yet the Carthaginians 'did not shirk from taking steps to remedy matters. Thus they selected thirty members of the senate, and besides them the previously-dismissed general Hanno, put in arms with them all the remaining men of military age—as though now running the last lap [i.e., making the ultimate effort]—and sent them out to Barca.' The thirty senators were emphatically bidden to use 'every means to reconcile the two generals from their previous quarrel and force them to take joint counsel in view of the existing state of affairs.' This they achieved. 'As they put forward many varied arguments once they brought the generals together, Hanno and Hamilcar were forced to agree and comply with what they said.'

Polybius' report, as so often, is a blend of detail (30 senators, Hanno) and of fuzziness—we are not told who the thirty were, why Hanno was reappointed, what arguments were used to reconcile him with Hamilcar and, most important, how many 'men of military age' were sent out. The 30 have sometimes again been seen as the inner council of The Mighty Ones (the new council, to those who suppose their predecessors had been killed around Spendius' corpse). In turn, imposing Hanno as

Hamilcar's colleague is often judged a triumph for anti-Barcid political forces—or even for the Punic senate as a whole if, as sometimes argued, Hamilcar and his supporters were a democratic (or demagogic) movement at odds with the ruling oligarchy.¹

Not enough, though, is known about the inner council to make it more than a possible candidate as the delegation. Those chosen may, instead, have been a blend of ex-magistrates, members of the court of 104, and ordinary senators. Conceivably too, not only were Hanno and his new troops intended to join Hamilcar in the field but perhaps the thirty delegates as well, to serve as senior officers: some in Hanno's division, others replacing those killed or captured from Hannibal's—and all continuing the good work of keeping the two generals in harmony. If so, their prime qualification would be military experience and personal persuasiveness.

It is worth asking why a second general was needed at all. The forces involved cannot have been huge. As estimated above, Hamilcar and Hannibal together had had maybe 20,000 men, though some of these were now dead. For the troops entrusted to Hanno Polybius uses an athletics simile ('now running the last lap') to colour his report that 'all the remaining men of military age' were sent out. Still, this cannot mean that Carthage itself was stripped bare of defenders, or even that all the trained garrison-troops were sent and raw citizen-recruits took their place. It would be folly to leave Carthage's fortifications unmanned or badly manned; the rebels were still at Tunes or, at best, had only just left. Polybius' simile looks like a further literary touch, to emphasise how serious indeed this 'last lap' was. As estimated earlier, the size of the city's garrison at the time of Spendius', Autaritus' and Zarzas' expedition inland was around 10,000 and rising, as fresh recruits—including foreign mercenaries—were added. In this 'last lap', moreover, the authorities would have no hesitation in persuading or

¹ Pol. 1.87.1–5. 'Men of military age', τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἡλικίαις; 'as though now running the last lap', οἷον ἐσχάτην τρέχοντες ταύτην (cf. 18.49.1, noted by Walbank, *Comm.* 1.148). Paton's translation 'as a sort of forlorn hope', and Pédech's 'vu que Carthage courait un péril extrême', are misleading. The 30 delegates are identified as the senate's (new) inner council by Meltzer, 2.39–40, 386, and Scullard (1989) 568; hesitantly by Walbank, *ibid.*, and Lancel (1992) 42; Sznycer (1978) 580 is dubious. Political setback for Hamilcar: also Veith (1912) 556–7; Walter (1947) 252; Picard, *Hann.* 73–74, and (1968) 119–20; Pédech (1969) 135 n. 3; Huss (1985) 265 n. 102; Scullard (1989) 568; Eckstein (1995a) 177; cf. de Sanctis, 3.1.391 (Hanno recovering equality in politics).

conscripting able-bodied citizens to serve, no matter how intense the Carthaginians' traditional reluctance to go soldiering.

Even so, the numbers gathered should not be overestimated. In a city the size of Carthage, despite the pressures of three years of war, the total of military-age men must certainly have been large. The peacetime population within the walls has been estimated at anywhere between 125,000 and a quarter of a million, with adult males totalling perhaps one-third. It was noted earlier, too, that rebel operations in the hinterland had probably driven many country folk into the city. If Polybius literally meant all men of military age, then the number sent out with Hanno—even after ruling out those too old or unhealthy, and troops held back for garrison-duty—should have come to between thirty and fifty thousand. That would have meant, in turn, that the two generals from now on disposed of 50–70,000 soldiers, and most of them Carthaginian citizens. This is far from likely.

Such massive citizen forces are unheard of, even at other times when Carthaginians enrolled against imminent attack. The 43,000 'citizen' cavalry, chariotry and infantry that Diodorus reports facing Agathocles in 310 soon turn out to include sizeable Libyan forces (and other sources report only 30,000 'rural'—meaning Libyan—troops). The next largest citizen contingent recorded was the 10,000-strong 'White Shields' division which, in 338, fought the Greek leader Timoleon at the river Crimisus in Sicily. Even in Carthage's last years, with the city threatened by vast Roman forces, the largest number of Punic soldiery reported was 20,000 (who were not necessarily citizens alone). It is better, then, to estimate the troops sent out with Hanno and the senatorial delegates at a more conservative 10,000 or so, and those staying to defend the city at about the same, each corps made up of citizen soldiers and foreign mercenaries. Survivors of Hannibal's division who had fled to the city were surely also ordered to join the force, perhaps another one or two thousand. Along with survivors Hamilcar had gathered in the field, the forces under the two generals would then total something like 25,000 men.²

² Carthaginians' traditional aversion to ordinary army service may, all the same, have developed relatively recently, after 306: Ameling (1993), esp. 155–235. The city's population is discussed by Hoyos (2003) 225–6, reviewing earlier estimates. Forces against Agathocles: Diod. 20.10.5 (τοὺς πολιτικούς); contrast 20.12.7 (the Libyan soldiers, Λίβυες, were behind the front line's citizen troops); Justin 22.6.5 ('cum xxx milibus paganorum'), echoed by Oros. 4.6.25; cf. Ameling, 192–3. It is implausibly desperate of Meltzer, 2.508, and Gsell 3.32 n. 2 to interpret Diodorus' Λίβυες as 'Carthaginians'.

Hanno's being chosen as the replacement for the crucified Hannibal is no proof that Hamilcar's political foes had gained ascendancy. As was suggested earlier, until they quarrelled the two men had more probably been allies than opponents. The quarrel may well have caused enmities among some of their friends and supporters. But there is no sign of either man pushing an ideological or social programme—any more than of a broader split between aristocracy and commons (often though this has been supposed too). Their reconciliation now was in the urgent interest of the republic. For strategic reasons, to allow Punic forces to operate once more in two separate but linked divisions, as in Hamilcar's and Hannibal's recent campaign, two generals in the field were judged desirable. And perhaps for psychological reasons—to show Carthaginians, allies and rebels alike that the republic's two top commanders were at the helm—it was felt necessary to have Hamilcar and Hanno as colleagues.

Polybius implies that, after the horrific deaths outside Tunes, all Carthaginians sank their differences to cooperate for victory. There is no reason to doubt him: a sort of Dunkirk spirit is understandable in this crisis. It was to both men's credit that they agreed to collaborate. What he does not stress, but still shows clearly, is how much in Hamilcar's favour the arrangement was. Hanno came out to him; and then it was up to the senatorial delegation to persuade them to work together. Polybius writes of the delegates using many and varied arguments to 'force' them into cooperation, but, given the circumstances, the force was moral. The delegates plainly had no official power to compel obedience or dismiss either general if he would not obey.

The mere fact that Hanno accompanied them implies that he was already virtually persuaded. In effect, by going out to Hamilcar with a pleading delegation he made a gesture of subordination. It was really Hamilcar who had to be worked on with the 'many and varied arguments'. Hanno certainly brought vital reinforcements, but these were a limited bargaining-chip. Had Hamilcar refused him as a colleague and sent him back to the city to play out his generalship there, the

Carthaginian forces in 149–146: Huss (1985) 441 (20,000, not necessarily all citizens), 451 (7,000). The supposed 84,000 civilians and fighters crushed at Nepheris in 147 look like shameless exaggeration (App. *Lib.* 126.601; Gsell, 3.394 n. 2; Huss, 454 and n. 121), and in any case nothing can be estimated for citizen soldiers among them. Survivors of Hannibal's division fled to Carthage: so too Loreto (1995) 186 n. 7, though he supposes these alone survived.

delegates could scarcely have compelled the reinforcements to be sent back, too. That would have left the republic in the same strategic danger as before. Since the two men did cooperate from now on, Hamilcar clearly let himself be persuaded.

This was a temporary and military expedient only, as Hanno's total eclipse after the war shows. For the most striking feature of his renewed prominence was how briefly it lasted. His reappointment obviously dated to very soon, perhaps only a few days, after the demise of Hannibal. The entire war, embers and all, was extinguished a few months later; and with it, or not long after it, Hanno's command. All the credit for victory went to Hamilcar. Partly this was thanks to Hamilcar's clear superiority as a general. Despite the Tunes defeat, his military performance over the past two years had wholly overshadowed Hanno's. Skilful propaganda too probably contributed, with his interests at Carthage being looked after by his son-in-law the astute Hasdrubal, no doubt backed up by his other son-in-law, Bomilcar. The Barcid family's range of supporters among the aristocracy and ordinary citizens can only have grown. Not only Carthaginian public opinion but election successes, too, must increasingly have favoured Hamilcar's side. Incoming magistrates, new senators, and new members of the tribunal of One Hundred and Four would be very inclined to act on military advice from the republic's leading general—another reason for the thirty delegates' respectful treatment of him.

Other prominent Carthaginians soon found it necessary to associate with Hamilcar's group, or risk being sidelined from affairs of state. Hamilcar would soon receive charge of the expedition to Spain and open a new era in Carthage's history. As outlined earlier, his postwar plans did not include a rôle for Hanno. It need arouse no surprise if some of Hanno's own supporters began to defect. But Hanno himself was too eminent to be a mere follower and too independent-minded to be a trusted equal. He lived on for another three and a half decades, yet never reappears in any position of authority, only as a powerless if prominent critic of the now-dominant Barcid faction.³

³ Seibert, *FzH* 105, supposes that the delegates had power to enforce obedience on the generals (followed by Gómez (1996) 308), but Polybius implies the reverse. For the view that social and economic discontents led to a 'democratic revolution' promoted by Hamilcar's faction, see especially Picard (1968), and other works cited in Chapter 3 n. 11.

One person who now vanishes from the record is Naravas. It is not at all probable that he was killed in action: our historian would hardly have ignored such a death. Not is it likely that, for some reason, he now withdrew his horsemen from the army and went home. The Carthaginians, if so, would have been seriously weakened in their crucial cavalry arm—just as the campaign approached its denouement. Polybius' narrative does not imply any impairment. The simplest explanation is that, intent on finishing off the story, Polybius now takes Naravas and his men for granted. He is equally silent about the army's elephants, despite all their previous prominence; and yet it would be rash to suppose that the elephants, too, had stopped playing a part in operations.⁴

⁴ On Naravas after the war, see Chapter 23, with n. 3.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MATHOS' END

The course of the next events is more than usually hard to reconstruct because, keen to bring the war to a finish, Polybius keeps details to a minimum. The two Carthaginian generals 'from now on cooperated with one mind', so that the enemy 'fared badly in successive clashes; for they fought many around the city called Leptis and some of the other cities'. Finally, he reports, both sides sought a full-scale battle. This makes it fairly clear that Hamilcar's and Hanno's cooperation showed itself in the 'successive clashes'. It is not to be supposed that, first of all, they proceeded against other rebel strongholds in Libya, leaving Mathos to prosecute his blockade of Carthage, subdued those, and only then prepared to advance against Tunes, once more from north and south; that would have been a reversal of priorities. Any rebel strongpoints still existing were a sideshow to the crucial issue of the rebel army. Hamilcar and Hannibal had recognised this previously, and coming events would prove it again.¹

'Leptis' must be either Leptis Minor on the Byzacium coast south of Hadrumetum—later called Leptiminus, today Lamta—or Lepcis (as more correctly spelled) Magna, about 800 kilometres on the coast to the south-east, near modern Tripoli. Lepcis Magna has its supporters, largely on the view that the rebels must have been trying to raise revolt in a new area or seeking to flee to Cyrene, if not Egypt. But it looks very unlikely. It would mean that Mathos somehow managed to keep ahead of his pursuers for a thousand kilometres or more, starting from around Tunes—with much of the later half of the march along coastal deserts—even though the Punic forces kept forcing him into a constant series of unsuccessful clashes or skirmishes. Again, any scheme of sparking revolt in that sparsely-populated land would have been an evident folly. The region had no particular grievances against

¹ Cooperation 'with one mind' and ensuing operations: Pol. 1.87.6–8. De Sanctis, 3.1.383, theorises a lengthy campaign by Hamilcar and Hanno against rebel-held strongholds inland, then followed by a new advance on Tunes and Mathos' evacuation. Walter (1947) 252–3, echoes this, with much embroidery.

the Carthaginians, who drew supplies from there, or known connexion with the rebels. Third, clashes around Lepcis and ‘some of the other cities’ present a military scenario difficult to envisage. Lepcis and its neighbours Oea and Sabratha lay some 60 kilometres apart from one another, which would imply a great deal of marching to and fro between engagements.

The implausibility is worsened by Polybius’ further report that, once the two sides decided to seek a final battle, they ‘called up all their allies for the clash and gathered their garrisons from the cities’. The rebels had no garrisons in so distant a sector of North Africa, even if perhaps there were Punic ones at Lepcis and its neighbours. It would have taken two months or more for remaining rebel elements to arrive from the north—were they to get through at all, with the Carthaginians no doubt doing everything to prevent them. Hamilcar and Hanno, by contrast, could have been reinforced much more swiftly by sea and would have no reason to put off battle until Mathos’ new forces could join in. The overwhelming probability is that Leptis in Byzacium, with its many neighbouring cities, is the place Polybius means.²

Mathos must have abandoned Tunes as soon as it became clear that he was again to be faced by strong enemy forces. The evacuation may have taken place even earlier, once he learned of Hamilcar’s presence at the Bagradas and decided it would be folly to attack him. Equally possibly, he hesitated for some time over how to react and made up his mind only when Hanno and Hamilcar united their forces. Then, having evacuated Tunes southward, the rebels would soon reach the river Mellane or its neighbourhood, just west of modern Crétéville, and had to choose which further route to take.

They might have moved south-west up the Mellane and then, maybe, across country to the Siliana and Bagradas regions—the old heartland of the rebellion—in hopes of picking up fresh recruits and supplies. Much of Libya had recently been brought back into submission by Hamilcar

² ‘Fared badly in successive clashes’, *δυσχρηστούμενους ἐν τοῖς κατὰ μέρος κινδύνοις* (87.7—not ‘partial engagements’, as Paton); *δυσχρηστούμενους* may also be translated as ‘frustrated’ (cf. Chapter 16 n. 4). Loreto, 185–7, argues for Lepcis Magna as the region, with Mathos aiming to raise a new revolt there or escaping to Cyrene. Huss too ((1985) 265 n. 103) thinks that supply-problems took the rebels to Emporia. De Sanctis, 3.1.383, explains Polybius’ skimpy details about the closing phase of the war as due to his pro-Barcid sources playing down Hanno’s equal, or even superior, contribution to victory; similarly Loreto, 188. This is to suppose that Hanno’s skills in field command had suddenly and sizeably improved compared to earlier.

and his colleagues but, as suggested above, these cannot have had time to make sure of all the country or even to leave troops to hold down communities that had yielded. So for Mathos and his men to march up-country need not have been a counsel of total despair. Yet, after years of struggle, repeated sweeps by Hamilcar's vengeful forces, and the loss of thousands of Libyan recruits in so many battles, it must have been questionable how much of Libya would once more rally to the rebels' standards, or how much money, supplies and new recruits the land could offer. Instead they opted to head east, to Byzacium.

It was suggested earlier that some communities there may have joined the rebellion while others (the old Phoenician colonies, in particular) stayed loyal to Carthage. Byzacium's fortunes during the war are unknown and it is not likely that major campaigning took place there. But small-scale fighting between local forces on either side, or intermittent raiding, may well have occurred. Mathos' retreat to the area implies that some, if not all, the rebel communities were still holding out, though Polybius quite unsatisfactorily names none. Such support, even at this stage, would mean food and maybe fresh weapons, and a hope—even if a desperate one—of fighting on long enough to obtain some sort of terms. Although the end of the year was nearing, winter in both Byzacium and its immediate hinterland was cool by day, though chilly at night—not a severe hindrance to military operations.³

Another prospect Mathos and his men may have clutched at, a still more desperate one, was escape by sea. This was not quite the bizarre notion it might seem. If the rebels held or could capture a port like Leptis or Thapsus, and attract merchant shipping with whatever funds they still had, they might yet evade destruction. It was sometime in the second half of 238 that the mutineers who had taken over Sardinia two years earlier were driven out by the islanders and fled to Italy. Earlier they had sent the Romans an invitation to join them in mastering the island, but this had been turned down. The details of the ejection are not known, but obviously they had obtained ships. There were only a few thousand mutineers, so limited shipping was needed, but it was an

³ Veith (1912) 557 implausibly thinks that Tunes kept a rebel garrison until this was summoned by Mathos for the final battle. Winter climate: at Sfax (ancient Taparura), average day and night temperatures in November are 16° and 11° C., in December 12° and 7°; even inland at Gafsa (Capsa), 120 km. from the gulf of Sirte, November's averages are 13° and 6°, and December's 10° and 5°, though of course the temperature will sometimes fall below the average (Chapter 15 n. 1); rainfall is modest (see entries at <www.weatherbase.com/weather>).

example to appeal to Mathos' army. All the more because the Romans, despite their support for Carthage in the rebellion, were rather surprisingly allowing the expelled men to stay in Italy (at least for the time being). Mathos and his troops might reckon that, if they could sail to Sicily, the island's new rulers would not refuse them entry. Or, failing Sicily, eastwards lay Egypt where seasoned mercenary soldiers would be welcome to the Ptolemies. Interestingly, Ptolemy IV's forces at the battle of Raphia two decades later would include 3,000 Libyan foot and a body of Libyan horse, as well as over 20,000 Greek, Gallic and other mercenaries.⁴

Flight by sea was of course only a wild hope. The season was not good, for Tunes was probably evacuated in roughly late October 238. Ships might still be hired if the rebels had the funds, or be commandeered, but winter sailing was almost a promise of disaster. As an alternative, they could try to hold on until spring sailing resumed. The only other prospect, as just mentioned, was to try to fight the Carthaginians to a standstill and look for some kind of terms. For all these possibilities the best region was Byzacium.

The rebels most likely marched through the passes over the northern Zaghouan range, past the town of Nephesis towards the gulf of Hammamet. An alternative route would have taken them, first, south-west along the inland flank of the Zaghouan range, then east across steppe country (the Tell) into Byzacium near Hadrumentum; but this is much less likely. It would have imposed a lengthy march through difficult inland country—the sort of terrain which had helped Hamilcar to his victories over Spendius—and delayed the army's arrival on the fertile coast, all the while under pursuit by the Carthaginians.

The new theatre of operations extended from roughly the base of the Cape Bon peninsula south to the coast opposite the island of Cercina (modern Kerkennah), about 200 kilometres away. Save for the districts nearest to Cape Bon and the Zaghouan range, the coastlands gave way, 30 kilometres or so inland, to the vast and thinly-populated stretches of the Tell. Most of Byzacium's towns lay on or near the sea, from Pupput in the north (close to today's Hammamet) to Taparura

⁴ Mutineers ejected by the Sardinians: Pol. 1.79.5 (cf. 88.8); their preceding appeal to the Romans, 83.11. Acquaro (1992) 146–7 unconvincingly thinks 'the Sardinians' were in reality 'le colonie fenicie di Sardegna'. Mercenaries in 3rd-century Egypt: Griffith (1935) 111–41. Egyptian forces at Raphia in 217: Pol. 5.65.1–10; Griffith, 118–20; W. Huss, *Ägypten in Hellenistischer Zeit, 332–30 v. Chr.* (München, 2001) 395–9.

and Thaenae opposite Cercina. Other notable towns included Gurza, Hadrumetum, Ruspina (modern Monastir), Uzitta, Acholla and, further inland, Thysdrus (El-Jem).

Hamilcar and Hanno were not far behind Mathos. They marched no doubt via Tunes, now abandoned, rather than the long way around, west of the town, which would have opened to the retreating rebels the route northward to Utica after all. Polybius' stress on the generals' cooperation implies that at some stage—from the start, or at latest on nearing the gulf of Hammamet—the generals divided their forces so as to threaten the rebels constantly on two fronts. The obvious arrangement would be for Hamilcar to lead his own veterans and the survivors of Hannibal's division, Hanno the troops from Carthage. A plausible reconstruction would be that, in the series of clashes which followed, they aimed to wear Mathos down and, if possible, force a decisive battle on him. Polybius locates these clashes 'around Leptis and some of the other cities'. As a Phoenician colony, Leptis Minor was probably on the Carthaginians' side. He may imply that it witnessed a clash of particular note: for instance, a rebel attempt on that port that was driven off by Hamilcar and Hanno. Defeated in every clash and no doubt with his field forces dwindling, Mathos at last gambled on a pitched battle.⁵

Polybius mentions both armies calling on their remaining allies and garrisons at this point. If this is accurate, the summons must have gone to those in the region. The rebels would have few allies or garrisons left in the heartland of Libya, and any who did risk venturing eastwards were likely to be intercepted by Hanno or Hamilcar. The only remaining rebel garrisons identifiable are those which (as inferred earlier) were keeping anti-Carthaginian factions in power at Utica and Hippacra. If these troops answered Mathos' call, they had to make a dangerously lengthy cross-country march of 200 kilometres or more. Perhaps some other places in Libya, too, were holding out even now, for Polybius reports that only after the Carthaginians' final victory in battle did 'the other parts of Libya' submit (save for Utica and Hippacra). But they too could hardly afford to send some of their own defenders to Mathos far away. He very likely had to use what forces he could pull together from his local allies, whoever they were.

⁵ Clashes 'around Leptis and some of the other cities': Pol. 1.87.7.

The rebels had numbered perhaps 20,000 on abandoning Tunes. Even if this is an underestimate, desertions on the march must be supposed. Men had deserted even during the rebellion's success; Hamilcar's army on his first sortie from Carthage had included some. With prospects now bleak, others would abscond—some perhaps to Hamilcar, for Polybius no longer mentions the no-quarter policy; others back to their home towns, or to a seaport where disillusioned veterans could look for a ship. The Punic army no doubt suffered desertions, too, but few of those were likely to join the increasingly harried rebels. There is certainly nothing to suggest that, as time passed, the Carthaginians' overall fortunes weakened while Mathos' improved. That would have been an odd result, indeed, of clashes which Polybius reports as unfavourable to the rebels. These clashes inflicted still more casualties. But as Mathos did accrue some reinforcements, his army may have come back to around 20,000 men for the last battle.⁶

Where the Punic generals drew their reinforcements from is no easier to assess. With most of Libya recently in revolt, the 'allies' Polybius mentions would include few Libyans—volunteer or conscript—for their loyalties would still be uncertain. The Punic generals perhaps sent to Carthage for troops, for Utica and Hippacra on their own were no threat to the city. Moreover, fresh mercenaries were probably still arriving at the city from time to time, looking for work or already on contract. The Carthaginians, after three years of war-making, would have accumulated plenty of weaponry for equipping them and could send them overland or by ship to Byzacium. Again, as mentioned earlier, the communities in Byzacium and Cape Bon very likely had their own local troops for self-protection, some of whom too could be ordered into the Punic army.

By the time of the final battle, Punic forces were very probably stronger than the rebels. Since Hamilcar and Hanno had entered Byzacium at the head of maybe 25,000 troops, as noted above, a reasoned estimate would give them (despite casualties) at least 30,000 in the final fight. This may be dated, very approximately, to the close of the year 238, eight to ten weeks after the armies entered Byzacium. That allows time

⁶ Summons to allies and garrisons: Pol. 1.87.8. 'The other parts of Libya', 88.1. Loreto too, 187–8, suggests that both sides drew only on allies and garrisons nearby, though for him this was the Lepcis Magna region (cf. n. 2). Veith, 557, while indicating Byzacium as the locale, unpersuasively relies on 87.8 to infer 'ein größeres Zeitintervall' between the clashes and the final battle.

for the successive 'clashes' before it and the summons to, and arrival of, reinforcements to both sides.

How the battle was fought, and where in Byzacium, is unknown. Hamilcar and Hanno (it was suggested above) were looking for a decisive engagement from the start, while Mathos was seeking to wear them down until he could either gain bearable terms or find an escape route from Africa. In the end, he was forced to accept that neither was possible without a full-scale fight.⁷

Polybius describes the battle as a set-piece action: the armies faced each other and, 'at an agreed moment', fell to blows. There would be little need of complex manoeuvres against the rebels' battered ranks. By now most of Mathos' old comrades of the army of Sicily would be gone—killed in earlier combats, crushed under Hamilcar's elephants, felled by his and Spendius' stonings, or carried off by sickness—leaving him, last of the rebellion's leaders, in command largely of fellow-Libyans who had enlisted during the war. Polybius in fact hints at this, for he refers only to 'Libyans' in the ranks. They were hardy and brave, as the battle showed. But, apart from probably being outnumbered, they had a general of limited skill. Mathos had always entrusted field command to Spendius and other deputies. His own recent coup against Hannibal's division had taken advantage of his opponents' carelessness—a flaw he and his men could not hope for now. The outcome was a foregone conclusion.

'Most of the Libyans were destroyed in the clash itself, others fled for refuge to a certain town and not long after surrendered. Mathos fell into his enemies' hands through capture.' The details of the fighting cannot be reconstructed from Polybius' curt report. We may infer that Hanno and Naravas played their parts; but the credit went to Hamilcar, plainly the senior commander.

That the survivors of the battle were willing to surrender rather suggests that he was now again offering quarter to beaten foes. Mercifulness in this last campaign did make sense. With the revolt close to collapse and its instigators accounted for, there was nothing to be gained by more frightfulness. Granting mercy to prisoners, at least for their lives

⁷ Veith, 567, 570–1, rather arbitrarily reckons the total of Carthaginian field forces throughout the war at 40,000, and so calculates 40,000 Carthaginians to 25–30,000 rebels for the last battle; echoed by Walbank, *Comm.* 1.148, and Scullard (1989) 568. Loreto, 187–8, argues for 20–25,000 each, and holds that the readiness of both sides for battle points to a change of political fortune in the rebels' favour.

(they would still be sold into slavery), and likewise to surrendered communities was constructive policy. After all, Carthage needed to rebuild her resources, finances and manpower, both to recover Sardinia and to undertake the Spanish expedition which, all but certainly, Hamilcar now had in mind. A pacified and productive Libya would be an important support for these enterprises.⁸

The crucial priority had been to destroy the last rebel army. Resistance almost everywhere else collapsed once this happened: 'the other parts of Libya quickly submitted to the Carthaginians'. But Libya's submission was notional unless the authority of the Carthaginian republic was reimposed directly. It is true that, after recording the victory, Polybius' next mention of Hamilcar and Hanno is outside Utica and Hippacra, the last defiant centres. But the organisation of his text is again instructive. Having reported the rest of Libya submitting, he goes on to explain why the Hippacritans and Uticans continued to hold out. They had no reason to expect a negotiated settlement 'because they had abandoned pity and humaneness when they first rebelled': a reference to the massacre of their Carthaginian garrisons. From this he draws a typically pragmatic moral—even when rebelling, it is valuable to practise moderation and avoid unforgivable acts. Only then does he bring the Punic generals back into the picture, besieging the towns.

This separation in his text between (on the one hand) the victory over Mathos and the submission of Libya, and (on the other) the reduction of Hippacra and Utica, recalls earlier literary touches that similarly suggest time-intervals and unreported activities. As a further hint of the function of this textual pause, it is worth noting that Polybius' pragmatic moral is not strictly apposite: for in the end the two towns were treated fairly mildly—past crimes and all. Nepos lists Hamilcar's achievements in Africa as recovering 'all the towns of Libya' including Utica and Hippacra, enlarging Carthage's North African territories, and restoring peace 'over all Africa so that it seemed no war had occurred there for many years'. Logically, the first two actions were what created the subsequent (rather too flatteringly described) peace. It can reason-

⁸ 'At an agreed moment' (ἐξ'ὁμολόγου), Pol. 1.87.9. 'Most of the Libyans [&c.]', 87.10. Loreto, 188 (echoing de Sanctis: n. 2 above), takes Polybius' lack of detail about the battle to mean that Hamilcar's rôle 'dovette essere se non inferiore pari a quello del collega'. Much likelier, Hanno's rôle was to carry out his part of Hamilcar's tactical plans. Likely mildness towards Libya: so too Law (1978) 131.

ably be inferred that some time passed before the two generals moved against Hippacra and Utica.⁹

A reasonable inference, then, is that after their victory Hamilcar and Hanno marched inland: for example around the southern edge of the Zaghouan range to Thuburbo Maius on the river Mellane, then westwards—in two or more divisions—to the regions of the Siliana and Bagradas, and finally down the Bagradas valley. They would thereby traverse Libya's main areas of population and production. With them (we may assume) came Mathos and other senior captives, their chains plain proof that the rebellion was dead. In each district they could punish guilty leaders, establish loyal Libyan notables in power, and set affairs in at least provisional order, even if more detailed ordinances were to come later from Carthage. These operations may be estimated as taking another eight to ten weeks, and the march down to the coast would finally bring the generals to the gates of Utica and Hippacra.

These activities involved no further fighting. There are two suggestions, all the same, of more violence at this time. As just mentioned, Nepos claims that Hamilcar now 'extended the territories of the [Carthaginians'] empire'. Then a later excerpt of Diodorus, in the context of the Second Punic War, states that 'the Carthaginians, after terminating the Libyan war, punished the Numidian tribe of the Micatani with their wives and children and crucified all those they captured', and as a result the tribe was ever afterwards fiercely hostile to Carthage. 'The Libyan war' should mean this war, as the phrase is commonly so used. Diodorus' item, all the same, raises more questions than it can answer. No tribe called Micatani (Numidian or otherwise) is known—even though, according to Diodorus himself, it continued to exist. Besides, after Naravas' change of side, no Numidians are reported fighting for the rebels, though that possibly reflects only Polybius' uninterest and, in any case, some tribes may well have used the upheaval in Punic Africa to make raids eastwards. If so, punishment was now meted out. Mass prisoner-crucifixions, however, were not Hamilcar's or other generals' practice during the war; and once the war was over, such ruthlessness was counter-productive (although it might be argued that the Carthaginians viewed unfriendly Numidians differently from ex-rebel Libyans).

⁹ Attitude of the Hippacritans and Uticans: 1.88.2; cf. Walbank, 1.148. Nepos, *Hamil.* 2.5: 'tota Africa tantum otium reddidit, ut nullum in ea bellum videretur multis annis fuisse.' Other examples of implied time-intervals: Chapter 17 n. 10.

Nepos' unspecific claim that after the revolt Hamilcar expanded the Punic 'empire', plainly meaning in Africa, is just as hard to verify. Before the revolt, Carthage had dominated inland territory as far as Sicca and Theveste, which both lay in Numidia. Cirta, the chief town of Naravas' people, lay in its turn about 250 kilometres west of Sicca. Appian, meanwhile, in one place reports the two generals now being appointed to deal with a Numidian 'outbreak' (with no details), yet in another work has Hamilcar appointed alone—in 241. These contradictory items can, at best, be treated as very woolly support for some Punic activity in Numidia after the collapse of the revolt.¹⁰

Perhaps Hamilcar and Hanno did now add some of the lands west of Sicca and Theveste to Carthage's dominion. Interestingly, the broad uplands between Sicca and Cirta had tempted an incursion in 307 by Eumachus, a Greek captain with Agathocles' expedition, and a town he briefly occupied there was named Miltine. Like the 'Micatani', it is not otherwise known, but just possibly the two might be different, or corrupted, forms of one name. Or perhaps the folk of Madauros, the future writer Apuleius' home town 50 kilometres west of Sicca (M'Daourouch today), are concealed under a still more disastrous manuscript-misspelling. These areas were scarcely vital enough for Hamilcar in person to annex. He had much else on his mind, even apart from the matter of Hippacra and Utica. Officers with suitable detachments of troops would have been enough to carry out the annexations (or he sent Hanno). In the usual way, Hamilcar would earn the credit.¹¹

¹⁰ Nepos, *ibid.*, 'etiam finis imperii propagavit'; for the Micatani, Diod. 26.23 (in context of the Second Punic War) and next note. On the names used for the war, see Huss (1985) 252; Loreto (1995) 34–40, shows that Λιβυκὸς πόλεμος became the commonest. App., *Lib.* 4.16–17, *Hannibalic* 2.3.

¹¹ Eumachus' campaigns in Numidia: Diod. 20.57–58; Huss (1985) 197–8; Consolo Langher (1992), esp. 29–31, 46–53, 75 map 5. Miltine: Diod. 20.58.1–2. With the 'Micatani' at 26.23, a textual corruption from (e.g.) ΜΙΑΤΙΝΑΙΩΝ, 'of the Miltinaei', to ΜΙΚΑΤΑΝΩΝ, 'of the Micatani'—or two alternative place-names (Miltine/Micatane)—are bare possibilities (though Numidian tribal names could be changeable, cf. Chapter 3 n. 5).

'Micatani' is even less plausible as an error for 'Muxsitani'—the Libyans dwelling in the *pagus Muxsitanus* between Thurburbo Minus and Hippacra, less than 50 kilometres west of Carthage; cf. Lancel (1995) 43, 'on hésite à identifier' the two. That area, like the rest of Libya, remained loyal to Carthage during the victorious Roman invasion of 204–201; but Diodorus' Micatani hated the Carthaginians. García Moreno (1978) 78 n. 24 identifies the Micatani with Herodotus' 'Maxyes' (4.191), on whom cf. *KIP* 3.1122, s.v. 'Mazyes'; but (despite Storm (2001) 22) Herodotus means, if anyone, Naravas' Massyli of eastern Numidia. Noteworthily, the earlier Greek writer Heca-

As the army ranged through Libya's districts and down to the coast, he was certainly working on further plans. Sardinia was to be recovered—a task that surely looked straightforward, now that the mutineers had been expelled—and he had Spain in mind as a major new venture to benefit the republic. Preparing these expeditions called for careful advance planning. In turn we know that, when the revolt ended, the Carthaginians were readying the forces for Sardinia, while the evidence for Hamilcar's career in Spain indicates that he was there before the middle of 237.¹²

The last act in the war was the generals' siege of Hippacra and Utica. With the defeat of Mathos datable to roughly the end of 238, and the pacification of Libya taking the next two months or so, the siege of the towns can be reckoned as opening around the start of March 237. Having discussed the two towns in that order, Polybius writes of 'Hanno besieging the one and Hamilcar the other', which allows us to hazard a guess that the two generals are named in the same order. During the operations to pacify Libya, as suggested above, the towns may not have been left to do as they pleased, for that could have caused inconveniences (if not worse) to the victors: for instance Utica and Hippacra could have served as safe havens for fugitive survivors, who in turn would only have made it harder to bring about capitulation. Hamilcar and Hanno would find no difficulty in sending some troops, or authorising some from Carthage, to block approaches to each town and, of course, prevent the townsfolk from venturing out for supplies. If they made overtures for terms, these were ignored. Polybius' emphasis on the inhabitants' fearful expectations implies no overtures were made to them—an effective piece of psychological warfare. Thus, when the generals themselves arrived to lay siege to either place, they 'quickly compelled' both to accept 'terms and conditions agreeable to

taeus (cited by Stephen of Byzantium, s.v. 'Mazyes') had divided the 'Mazyes' into two tribes, Maxyes and Machlyes, which surely reminds us of Massyli and Masaesyli. The 'Maxitani', whom Justin (18.6.1) mentions as neighbours of the primitive Carthaginians, are seen by J. Desanges (*Philologus* 111 (1967) 304–8) as the Muxsitani, but Justin may well be thinking of the residents of Maxula, today's Radès on the coast just south-east of Tunis.

¹² Chronology of Sardinia crisis and Hamilcar in Spain: Hoyos (1998) 138–40; (2000) 377–8. Loreto, 213, quite differently estimates that the Numidian campaign took up 6–7 months in mid-237, for he allows Hamilcar into Spain only at the end of that year; but cf. Hoyos (2000) 378 n. 15.

the Carthaginians'. The townsfolk cannot have put off surrender for more than a few days.¹³

Elliptically unhelpful again, Polybius passes over what the terms and conditions were, but we saw earlier that neither town seems to have undergone harsh treatment. It may be that the anti-Carthaginian leadership at each place, bereft of outside support, collapsed in favour of their opponents (the previously dominant group) when the generals pressed the siege. It would make sense for Hamilcar and Hanno to let it be known that a return to the former leaders was a prerequisite. On the Carthaginian side, with steps being taken for the expeditions abroad, a quick settlement with their sister cities was desirable. The likely terms involved punishment for leading rebel supporters, communal fines or reparations for slaughtering the Carthaginian garrisons, even perhaps some added settlers—Carthaginians and people from other old Phoenician colonies, like those in Byzacium—to ensure the towns' future loyalty.

The generals marched back to Carthage in triumph with their troops and captives. Euphoria in the city was matched by bitterness and bloodlust. Polybius succinctly summarises the close. 'So ended the Libyan war, which had taken the Carthaginians into such crisis. As a result they not only again became masters of Libya, but also imposed condign punishment on those guilty of the revolt. At the end, the young men led the victory march through the city and publicly inflicted every outrage on Mathos.' Or the last phrase, for once, may bear its more literal Greek sense of 'on Mathos and his comrades', for there would be other notable prisoners to put on show and Polybius' reference to 'those guilty of the revolt' perhaps hints at them. The punishment of Mathos most likely ended in the central square of Carthage. Once more Hamilcar enacted the tortures that had so often disfigured the course of the war. Specifically he was requiting Mathos, and perhaps Mathos' remaining lieutenants, for what they had done to Hannibal at Tunes and to Gisco before that. So for Mathos, last of the rebel chiefs, the end was as it had been for Spendius and Autaritus, his comrades and friends: fastened to a cross and his remains left to rot under the eyes of the Carthaginians.

¹³ 'Quickly compelled' &c.: Pol. 1.88.4 (my translation).

By mid-March 237 the Truceless War was over. It was three years and four months since the army of Sicily had mutinied at Tunes.¹⁴

¹⁴ 1.88.5–6. 'Mathos and his comrades' (and not just 'Mathos') *may* here be the sense of τοῖς περὶ τὸν Μάθω. Although normally the phrase οἱ περὶ τὸν 'X' is periphrasis in later Greek for 'X' alone, there are exceptions: cf. Pelling's note on Plutarch, *Antony* 9.3 (Chapter 12 n. 5), giving examples in Plutarch where it instead means 'X and his supporters'. Polybius' reference to punishment for 'those guilty of the revolt' perhaps hints at this, too. Still, he may just be thinking of the earlier deaths of Spendius and the other leaders, and punishments meted out during the pacification of Libya. On Mathos' end, note how in Spain, a year or two later, Hamilcar was to inflict on a captured lord, Indortes, another brutal doom reminiscent of Spendius' (Diod. 25.10.2). But Flaubert's unforgettably horrific depiction of Mathos' death-march through Carthage (*Salammbo*, chap. 15) is a free composition.

Three years and 4 months: Pol. 1.88.7. Diodorus' 'four years and four months' (25.6) is a mistake, perhaps a copyist's; and Livy's '5 years' (21.2.1) merely rounds off the whole period 241 to 237 by inclusive counting. On the length of the war see, e.g., Walbank, 1.148–9; Seibert, *Hann.* 14, 22–23; Loreto (1995) 211–13; Hoyos (2000) 370–1, 379–80.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

VICTORY AND HUMILIATION

Hamilcar's ascendancy, with his kinsmen and political supporters, was more or less established by the beginning of 237. Public feeling favoured him all the more because his projects for Sardinia and Spain were plainly intended for Carthage's recovery. The troops were available. There was the garrison at Carthage, for example, most of it now hardly necessary to protect the city. Before and after the winter, fresh mercenaries too would be arriving at Carthage, as surmised earlier, looking for employment or having been promised it. Hamilcar and Hanno themselves would have had no continuing need of up to 30,000 men once Libya began to submit, so apart from some troops perhaps being sent ahead to intimidate Utica and Hippacra, others could have headed for Carthage to prepare for a move overseas. Finally, new conscripts could (with due caution) be levied from the penitent Libyans, not only as military manpower but likewise as useful guarantees of their home towns' future good behaviour. Properly treated, these troops would become first-class soldiery, as Hamilcar's son was to demonstrate in his campaigns far from both Spain and Africa.

How the state planned to pay for all these activities can only be surmised. Through all the hardships and setbacks, the republic had managed, as shown earlier, to meet essential costs. The treasury in March 237 held 1,200 talents at least, for soon afterwards it was unexpectedly forced to pay this sum (equivalent to 7,200,000 Greek drachmas) to the Romans. In fact it probably held more, because the sudden outflow of funds did not stop Hamilcar from setting out as planned, with army and fleet, for Spain. But revenues had to be restored urgently. Plunder, fines and selling prisoners into slavery would bring in some immediate funds. Then, as trade recovered, so would customs revenues. In pacifying Libya, Hamilcar and Hanno might forego terror against defeated enemies but a certain amount of punitive exactions, like confiscations and fines, can be inferred. No doubt regular taxes, too, were soon reimposed.

A sensible balance needed to be struck. Having financed the rebel war-effort, from the early enthusiasm of contributions on to the con-

tinuous needs of the armies, and suffered the effects of three years of campaigns over much of the countryside, Libyan communities must now have been in severe difficulties, many all but destitute. Fines and confiscations would add to their troubles. Therefore savage punishments and harsh new taxation—the kind which had set the Libyans on the road to rebellion—would simply perpetuate bitterness and make pro-Carthaginian régimes unstable, an outcome no intelligent Carthaginian leader wanted. Hamilcar and Hanno, or Carthaginian officials sent out afterwards to finalise details, needed to apply both judgement and tact in restoring relations between the city and its subjects. The Libyans' loyalty a generation later, in the difficult years of the Second Punic War, is a reasonable indicator that the Carthaginians did achieve essentially the right settlement.

These processes for creating stability at home and new opportunities abroad were overtaken by troubling news. The Romans had decided to accept a plea for help made by the mutineers expelled from Sardinia. They were now readying a force of their own to sail to the island.¹

The news was probably brought by merchants arriving from Italy. Polybius clearly indicates that the Carthaginians then sent a protest: 'the Carthaginians were angry, on the ground that rule over Sardinia belonged instead to them, and they made preparations to hunt down those who had removed the island from them.' This second item must be loosely expressed; for there could be no question of sending an expedition against the mutineers in Italy. An expedition made sense only for recovering Sardinia. Since the native Sardinians had plainly not invited the Carthaginians back, from the latter's viewpoint they were equally in revolt. They were, in fact, the people whom the Carthaginians meant to 'hunt down'—in other words, punish—and four or five lines later Polybius himself makes it clear that the expedition was 'against the Sardinians'.

The response from Rome was staggering. 'Taking hold of this pretext, the Romans voted war against the Carthaginians, saying they were making their preparations not against the Sardinians, but against them [i.e., against the Romans].' This war-vote, a formal declaration as Polybius shows in a later book, they then 'announced' to the Carthaginians, evidently via a Roman embassy. Not only was war declared out of the blue, but it could be carried out: the Roman preparations for taking

¹ The Sardinia crisis: Schwarte (1993); Loreto (1995) 195–9; Hoyos (1998) 132–43; Ameling (2001).

over Sardinia could easily be expanded and turned against North Africa. During the 230s and 220s they had some two hundred warships available, and they could rapidly levy powerful armies for service abroad, as the Carthaginians knew from experience. Their announcement was totally incomprehensible at Carthage. Until now, not only had they backed the republic materially and had rejected Utica's self-surrender, but the Sardinia mutineers' own approaches had previously been turned down—and that while they were still holding the island. The expedition now being readied at Carthage to recover it was surely far too small to look, even to the most gullible, like one really aimed at Italy. Polybius, too, seems to find the Roman action impossible to explain, even though he criticises it sharply more than once.²

He implies that the Carthaginians saw the whole thing as a misunderstanding or over-reaction. The Carthaginians 'at first sought to come to an agreement on every point, expecting that they would prevail on the merits of the case.' Thus Hamilcar and The Mighty Ones sought to put the Punic case to the Roman envoys, or a Carthaginian embassy in its turn hastened to Rome. Either way they met with a flat refusal. But now—it seems—the Romans switched to, or added, a very different complaint. It may well be that, once Carthaginian spokesmen explained the aim (and size) of the Sardinia expedition, the Romans decided that the claim about it threatening Italy was too implausible to use. Instead, they charged that the Carthaginians 'had wronged those sailing to them during the Libyan war': in other words had mistreated the merchants who had been arrested early in the war for trading with the rebels. Appian's very garbled summary of the crisis could suggest that there was even a claim of some merchants being murdered and the secret being only now discovered. It was also made clear, by the Roman envoys at Carthage or else at Rome to Carthaginian ambassadors, that ceding Sardinia and paying a new, heavy indemnity of twelve hundred talents would produce a peaceful resolution.³

² 'Taking hold of this pretext' &c.: Pol. 1.88.10 (λαβομένοι τῆς ἀφορμῆς ταύτης). Here, and at 3.10.1, 3.15.10 and most explicitly 3.28.1–2 ('against all justice', &c.), Polybius makes clear that he views the Roman seizure of Sardinia as illicit. His details of the Sardinia crisis are rather idiosyncratically spread over four separate passages: 1.88.8–12, 3.10.1–3, 3.27.7–8 and 3.28.3–4 (and cf. 1.79.5). Roman naval strength in 230s–220s: Thiel (1954) 347–9.

³ Appian, *Iber.* 4.15, and *Lih.* 5.19. He believes the merchants-allegation, as does Dio (Zon. 8.8.13). Other Roman authors like to claim that Sardinia had been ceded

Of course, it did no good for the Carthaginians to remind their tormentors of what had really happened over the merchants back in 240, or how the Romans—far from complaining—had rewarded Carthage by freeing still-unransomed war prisoners; or that Carthage had governed Sardinia for centuries and the Romans had never questioned this. In practice Hamilcar and his faction had virtually no option except to cave in. The Punic navy was adequate for patrolling the coasts, but could not take on a Roman war-fleet two hundred strong. Nor can the land forces have been strong enough to counter an invasion, even if by now they did number some 30,000. The Romans would certainly despatch two consular armies—40,000 troops—as they had done under Regulus and Manlius twenty-eight years before. In any case, after three years of internal war Libya was in no state to cope with, still less to finance, a fresh foreign war against enemy aggression.

It probably required another Punic embassy to sail to Rome to ratify the terms. These were simple and sharp. ‘The Carthaginians are to leave Sardinia’ (in other words, give up their claim to it) ‘and pay over a further twelve hundred talents.’ The crisis ended at once. From start to finish it need have lasted only four or five weeks, for the Carthaginians were not in a position to argue or bargain lengthily.

That the Romans seriously wanted a fresh Punic war must be doubted. If they had, the Carthaginians’ swift acceptance of the terms would not have satisfied them, any more than an even more complete Punic submission to even harsher Roman terms would do in 149. Yet Sardinia itself was treated as no urgent prize. The Romans could have taken it when the mutineers first offered it, while Carthage had been hopelessly caught up the toils of the Libyan war. After the crisis, they still took their time; a consul went over with an army only in 235. The 1,200 talents were plainly a more useful item right away, but there had been no financial crisis at Rome or in Italy since 241 to cause the Romans to need so vast a sum.

What had changed between the mutineers’ first offer and their second was that the rebellion in Africa ended and Carthage’s victory was mainly due to Hamilcar—the Romans’ most determined antagonist in Sicily down to 241. Now, the rebellion barely finished, they saw him readying fresh military moves beyond Africa. The prospect of Sardinia

in the peace of 241: Livy 21.40.5, 22.54.11 (but not at 21.1.5); Eutropius 3.2.2; Oros. 4.11.2.

re-mastered by an aggressively reviving Carthage plainly worried them. It would bring back Punic power not far north of Sicily, which now lay under Roman dominance. If the Carthaginians continued their revival under Hamilcar, the Romans might reckon, the temptation to them to strike at Sicily from north as well as west—to undo the outcome of the twenty-three years' war of 264–241—would become inevitable. Conceivably, some Roman leaders even perhaps suspected that Spain was not truly Hamilcar's main goal, but only a cover for just such a revanche. Seizing Sardinia was, therefore, not enough. The Carthaginians must pay over the money that could finance a major war.

The Romans probably felt fairly confident they would not have to fight. Their contacts with North Africa throughout the war had kept them broadly up to date with conditions at Carthage itself and in the countryside of Libya. But their war-declaration, and its termination by formally appending the new terms to the peace of 241, show they were in deadly earnest. Had Hamilcar and his fellow-citizens decided to tough it out, the second Punic war would indeed have been the one which the Romans arbitrarily announced in spring 237. Although the Carthaginians 'yielded to circumstances', as Polybius puts it, their humiliation over Sardinia left them bitter and resentful, all the more because it followed so swiftly on their own arduous victory.

No one felt this more strongly than their new leader. At the ritual ceremony for the departure to Spain soon after, Hamilcar bound his eldest son, nine-year-old Hannibal, by oath 'never to be friendly towards the Romans'—an oath that Hannibal never forgot and claimed never to have broken. Hamilcar, followed by his son-in-law Hasdrubal and afterwards by Hannibal, created a great and rich—and very heavily armed—Punic province in Spain to make Carthage more powerful than ever in her history. The experience of 237 left them permanently wary of Rome. Two decades later, Hannibal's resentful suspicion about Roman intentions towards the new province would prove a crucial factor in bringing on the next, and greatest, war between the two republics.⁴

⁴ Terms of Sardinia settlement: Pol. 3.27.8. 'Yielded to circumstances', 1.88.12. Hannibal's oath: 3.11.4–12.1; Nepos, *Hann.* 2.4; Livy 21.1.4, 35.19.3–6; other versions of it, heavily coloured, are cited by Walbank, *Comm.* 1.314; cf. Hoyos (2003) 246 nn. 7–8. Heavily armed Spanish province: Diod. 25.12—56,000 and later 68,000 foot and horse.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A BALANCE-SHEET

The Truceless War had threatened the Carthaginians with the loss of all their territories in Africa and, for a time, seemed to threaten even the existence of the city. Thousands of combatants were killed in battle or after capture. Hamilcar in his campaigns across Libya's heartland had stormed towns which resisted him, no doubt adding numbers of civilians—men and women—to the kill total. As armies marched and counter-marched around the countryside, they foraged and plundered as armies always did. The damage to crops, fields, livestock and property must have been severe. Moreover, deserters from either side would not invariably join the opposing army; many Libyans would try to return home and, to provision themselves on the way, they would surely loot, rob and sometimes murder too. Others would prefer to turn bandit, as long as opportunities offered.

A general picture of Libya's condition by 237 is thus inevitably bleak. A more nuanced one is harder to develop, because Polybius and the other, much briefer sources are so miserly with place-names and geography. All the same, the Carthaginians seem to have emerged from the war less damaged than they, and others, probably had expected. Relatively few citizens lost their lives—unlike the tens of thousands of Roman deaths in the first three years of the Second Punic War—because the republic's armies were made up only partly of Carthaginians, and defeats had been few, Hannibal's outside Tunes the most notable. As noted more than once above, the Cape Bon peninsula seems to have been loyal to Carthage and (very largely) untroubled by rebels; fighting in Byzacium, it seems, may chiefly have been between rebel and loyal communities—not on a large scale, therefore—until the final campaign. War-damage to both regions was thus probably limited. Because of both areas' productivity this would be a major help to Carthage's economic and financial recovery.

Conditions will have been worse in the heartlands of Libya—the Bagradas, Siliana and Mellane valleys and surrounding uplands, and along the coast from Tunes to Hippacra. In all likelihood these were

the districts that bore the brunt of inland campaigning. On the other hand, the impact of these campaigns looks more limited on second appraisal. Hamilcar's first foray inland, leading to his entrapment and then the turning of the tables on the enemy, took up the summer and perhaps early autumn of 240, as estimated earlier. The second campaign, culminating at The Saw, began around spring 238 and by September Hamilcar and Hannibal were back at the coast blockading Tunes. Actual campaigning in the interior, then, engrossed at most twelve months of the war's forty. No doubt there were other episodes of fighting, for example where rebel and loyalist towns were neighbours and inclined to harass each other. Still, the damage inflicted on Libya, though in places it must have been extensive, could not be of the same order of magnitude as the havoc wrought by the later Hannibal's fourteen years of war in southern Italy, or the desert-making horror of the Thirty Years' War on the most devastated parts of Germany, like Pomerania, Württemberg and the Palatinate.

The sectors most constantly warred over were, in fact, the environs of Carthage, Utica and Hippacra, though there too the situation was static—blockades or sieges—for much of the time. Outside Carthage and at Tunes, at least, once the fighting was over it was in the Carthaginians' own interest to rehabilitate farms, fields, orchards and fisheries. It was in their interest again, even if a less urgent concern, to help Utica and Hippacra rehabilitate their own territory. Restoring a pro-Carthaginian élite there to preside over lasting impoverishment and neglect would be a recipe for fresh discontent; and, after 237, the Carthaginians could not risk another Utican *deditio*-offer to Rome. Utica's stubborn defiance of its Roman besiegers three decades later suggests, as noted above, that the Carthaginians dealt with it and Hippacra reasonably.¹

All the same, Carthage's and Libya's recovery would have been slower without Spain. Hamilcar's and his successors' conquests included unashamedly economic aspects. Taxes and trade grew as well as the military forces. Mineral wealth was exploited: a decade and a half later, one silver mine, according to the later encyclopaedist Pliny the Elder,

¹ Impact of Second Punic War on Italy: (e.g.) E. Gabba, in *CAH*² 8 (1989) 197–243; T. Cornell, in Cornell, B. Rankov, and P. Sabin (eds.), *The Second Punic War: a Reappraisal* (London, 1996), 97–117; J.-M. David, *The Roman Conquest of Italy* (Engl. tr.: London, 1996) 54–74. Impact of Thirty Years' War: G. Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London, 1984) 163–6, 208–15.

was producing 300 pounds a day. This huge sum (adding up to 1,500 talents, or 9 million drachmas, a year) may rather represent all of Punic Spain's precious-metal revenue around 220, if not the province's total revenues to Carthage, but it illustrates the economic importance of the new territories. Again, in contemporary Hellenistic fashion Hamilcar and his successor Hasdrubal founded impressive cities there, notably Acra Leuce (probably modern Alicante/Alacant) and 'New' Carthage (Cartagena), both on the south coast with ready communications to North Africa and both destined to prosper.

Much of the new wealth came to Carthage and Libya, even if not all (the great armies and the costs of Spanish administration had to be paid for too). According to Nepos in his life of Hamilcar, 'with horses, arms, men and money he enriched the whole of Africa'. The list is not obviously rhetorical, and the range of products is interesting. The money must, of course, have been from tribute and other proceeds. The best horses for warfare were Numidian, so horses sent from Spain were more probably farming and transport animals. If so, it is a noteworthy hint of agricultural and economic restoration taking place in Punic Africa during the 230s. Similarly perhaps the 'men'; as nothing points to settlers being sent over, or Spanish troops before Hannibal's war-preparations in 219–218, Nepos' source most likely meant slaves, captured in Hamilcar's campaigns or otherwise acquired in the Peninsula, who would work in the fields or as artisans in towns. The arms are rather easier to explain, for Spanish weapons had a high reputation, notably the curved *falcata* sword and the short straight sword which the Romans were already adopting as their *gladius hispaniensis*. Punic armies would be better fitted out than ever.

The bulk of all such products and funds would go to Carthage, where Hamilcar needed to foster his political base. Appian claims that part of the funds went to the Punic state, part to his own political supporters. It was predictable that the Barcid faction would benefit substantially, though after 237 most politically active men needed, in any case, to be members of the faction or in alliance with it, depending on their own levels of eminence and their ties to other leading figures. But much had to be spent—directly or indirectly—on the ordinary citizens, too, whose support elected Barcid and pro-Barcid men to *sufeteships* and other offices. When Hannibal sacked Saguntum eighteen years later, he used a good deal of the rich plunder from that town to reinforce popular support at home, a step especially essential since he was risking a new confrontation with the Romans.

All the same, Nepos' emphasis on 'the whole of Africa' benefiting—meaning the whole of Libya—need not be just a rhetorical flourish. Libyan towns and districts might well expect some share of Spanish wealth, however small, in return for the men and munitions they were contributing to Carthage's military contingents and for their submission to Carthage's restored hegemony. It was in Hamilcar's and his successors' interest, likewise, to foster relations with leading men at sister-towns like Utica, Hippacra and those in Byzacium, and in Libyan communities too. An important way of doing so would be by enabling them to share, one way and another, in the profits of Spain. And, at lesser social levels, officers and veterans coming home after discharge would bring whatever loot and pay they had saved. Even though details are lacking, such policies clearly worked. As mentioned earlier, Hannibal's most dependable troops in his expedition to Italy were the Africans: in other words his Libyan divisions.²

The Libyans, then, returned to their old obedience. The scattered and suggestive items already mentioned are the only evidence for how they were treated. The likelihood is that, after a phase of retribution, they came into better conditions—especially over taxes—than they had suffered in the 240s. Libyan communities certainly showed no inclination to defect to the invading Romans in 204–202: Scipio ravaged and plundered parts of the countryside, but no towns or districts are reported as voluntarily changing sides. Much the same was to happen two generations later still, in the Third Punic War, apart from coastal—and Phoenician-descended—places like Utica, which did turn against their sister city to save themselves. All the same, it seems Libyan obedience did not lead to Libyan enthusiasm for Carthage. When Scipio penetrated far up the Bagradas valley in 203, to the Great Plains near Bulla, and even deeper inland in 202 to the region around Sicca and Naraggara, he plainly had no trouble from the Libyan communities. No one harassed

² Pliny on the Spanish mine at Baebelo (site unknown): *NH* 33.97; Hoyos (2003) 225. Acra Leuce and New Carthage: Huss (1985) 273, 276–7; *DCPP* 17–18, s.v. 'Alicante' (F. Molina Fajardo); *ibid.*, 95, s.v. 'Carthagène' (Molina Fajardo and E. Lipinski); Hoyos (2003) 63–9, 78–80. 'With horses' &c.: Nepos, *Hamil.* 4.1. Copious texts and other items illustrating Barcid Spain's riches are listed by Blázquez Martínez (1961) 23–9. Spanish weaponry: Kromayer & Veith (1928) 325 and Plate 40, no. 118 (*gladius*); Connolly (1981) 150–2; Wise & Hook (1999) 17–22, with further illustrations on 23–31. Funds sent from Spain to Carthage: App. *Iber.* 5.8 (Hamilcar); Pol. 3.17.7, 10–11 (Hannibal).

his movements or threatened his communications. His only opposition came from Carthage's field armies and their Numidian allies.

The war also redefined Carthage's relations with the Numidians. Previously, these had been often troublesome neighbours, as noted above; Naravas originally entered the scene as an ally of the rebels. What became of him is not recorded, for the utilitarian Polybius drops him from the story once he has served his turn. If he was unmarried when he joined Hamilcar, but had at least one legitimate son whose descendant commemorated *Nrwt* a century later, he must have returned home to raise a family. Whether he did at last wed one of Hamilcar's daughters is not known, but both Carthage and the Barcid family remained on very friendly terms with the royal house of the Massyli. His brother Oezalces later married one of Hamilcar's granddaughters, as mentioned earlier.

After 237, eastern Numidia, or most of it, was ruled by Gaia, the Massylian king and Naravas' other brother. Gaia became a valued Carthaginian ally, supporting them in the Second Punic War. His warlike son Masinissa was educated at Carthage, again as mentioned earlier, and campaigned with Punic forces in Spain until 206. Gaia seems to have united eastern Numidia under the Massyli, and it looks as though he did so with Carthaginian—meaning Barcid—blessing. When the ambitious Syphax, king of the Masaesyli and unifier of western Numidia, went to war with the Massyli around 213, he had to fight the Carthaginians too. Eventually, after Gaia's death in 206, Syphax managed to seize his kingdom, but by then he in turn had become closely allied with Carthage, taking a Carthaginian wife (the ill-starred Sophoniba). The dispossessed Masinissa went over to the Romans, with fateful consequences for Syphax and, ultimately, Carthage. Western and eastern Numidia's unifications might have taken place anyway, but the way they did and the active interest of Barcid Carthage in such developments were further, if indirect, outcomes of the Truceless War.³

For Polybius the war was a prime example, and a stark warning, of the dangers a mercenary army could pose. His account, he avers,

³ On Numidia down to 203 see Storm (2001) 22–31. Inscription with *Nrwt*: Chapter 13 n. 5. Livy elsewhere (40.17.1–3) mentions Gaia taking some territory from the Carthaginians, then Syphax driving him out of it and, later, restoring it to Carthage. If accurate, this would suggest there was a time when Gaia and the Carthaginians were at odds, but Livy's details are few, vague and perhaps confused—quite possibly because they come from a land claim put forward by the wily Masinissa decades later.

would enable 'those making use of mercenary forces' to take the right precautions, and would reveal too 'how and to what extent blended and barbarous characters differ from those reared in proper education, laws and civilised principles.' Writing for a Greek world which regularly used mercenaries and, as we saw earlier, was acutely aware of their perils, he gives no actual details about what lessons should be learned. Probably he expected them to be obvious. One was the danger posed by long-unpaid mercenaries who were offered neither adequate compensation, nor a new field of war where plunder might make up their losses. Another lesson was never to put discontented and numerous mercenaries in close proximity to discontented and populous subjects. A third was that if the first two situations did occur, haggling over arrears must be kept to a minimum. Had the Carthaginians acted on these principles (Gisco had tried to show the way), the war could have been averted, however evil the morals of the mercenaries and Libyans. But these lessons, rational and pragmatic as they were, nevertheless were not easy for a Greek state to implement amid the realities of its politics and wars. In this sense Polybius' pragmatism, ironically, is idealistic.⁴

It was Carthage rather than Greece that learned the lesson. Even though the Barcid generals created huge armies compared with the forces available during the war, very little trouble with their soldiery is reported beyond intermittent desertions (something always to be expected, even in Roman armies). In a famous comment, Polybius stresses how Hamilcar's son Hannibal kept the loyalty of his variegated forces over long and hard years of war in Italy: 'like a good ship's captain, he kept [them] free from sedition towards him or among themselves, and this although his divisions were not only of different nationalities but of different races'—Libyans, Spaniards, Ligurians, Gauls, 'Phoenicians' (presumably meaning Libyphoenicians), Italians and Greeks. Livy, elaborating on this, describes how Hannibal maintained the absolute loyalty of 'an army not of fellow-citizens but scraped together from the dregs of all peoples', even when money and food ran short after 207. The mercenaries and conscripts of Punic armies after 237 were thus as varied in origins, languages and religions as those before, but served faithfully and—under a general like Hannibal—even enthusiastically. The second-century Roman poet Ennius

⁴ Pol. 1.65.7–8; see also Walbank, *Comm.* 1.131–2, and (1972) 89–90; Eckstein (1995a) 129; Champion (2004) 89, 111, 245.

has him declare to his men on the eve of invading Italy: 'to me he who smites the foe will be Carthaginian, whoever he be, whatsoever his folk.' We can rule out any thought of the Barcid leaders underpaying their troops, holding back pay for long periods, cheating over plunder, or treating some elements as inferior to others.⁵

Polybius' own third reason—the principal one, he insists—for narrating the war is that it provides an essential key to why the Second Punic War came about. Yet he keeps any link between the two from readers until he reports how the Romans used the Carthaginians' involvement in the war to seize Sardinia from them. Even then we have to wait until Book Three, where the causes of the new war are expounded, for him to classify the Carthaginians' anger at the rape of Sardinia as the principal cause—this, he plainly implies, is why the Truceless War is relevant. Obviously, to claim that this indirect and circumstantial link is the chief reason for narrating the Libyan war is open to criticism. Even in his own terms, such a primacy is problematic, for he simultaneously insists that from 241 Hamilcar had aimed to reverse his city's defeat by the Romans, and would have set about it right away had the mercenaries not rebelled.

None the less, Polybius is right to show how Hamilcar owed to the war his ensuing dominance in the republic's affairs, as chief general and through his home supporters. Had Hanno or Gisco been more adroit in handling the army of Sicily during 241, Hamilcar all but certainly would have remained an ex-general saddled, however unfairly, with the odium of making a humiliating peace, nor might Sardinia have been lost. Whether or not the Truceless War did contribute to the coming of the second war with Rome, it certainly achieved for Hamilcar and the Barcid family a supremacy in the state which was both an echo of earlier families' dominance—like Mago's two centuries before—and, at the same time, displayed many of the qualities of charismatic military kingship in the contemporary Hellenistic world. In this way the war changed Carthage's history, and Polybius' essential insight is correct.⁶

⁵ Pol. 11.19.3 (tr. Paton, slightly adapted); Livy 28.12.3–9, drawing on Polybius but adding other items, perhaps from Coelius (with 'ex colluvione omnium gentium' perhaps borrowed by the Duke of Wellington for his notorious comment about the British army in the Peninsula: 'ours is composed of the scum of the Earth—the mere scum of the Earth', quoted by C. Hibbert, *Wellington: a Personal History* (London, 1997) 82, 139).

⁶ Third and 'principal' reason (τὸ μέγιστον) for narrating Truceless War, 1.65.8–9; criticised by Walbank, *Comm.* 1.132. Logically speaking, 65.8–9 is not taken up until 88.5–12, where Polybius summarises the entire war and then reports the rape of

The war displayed, too, the resilient toughness of the Carthaginians. The historian does not say this, but he makes it clear enough. Despite bringing near-disaster on their own heads they fought back, backing first Hanno and then Hamilcar despite reverses and shortages. At critical moments they made the right decisions—reappointing Hamilcar in 240, later allowing the forces in the field to choose him over Hanno, and rallying to ‘run the last lap’, in Polybius’ phrase, after the defeat outside Tunes. Sometimes derided as an unwarlike merchant people, the Carthaginians in fact (like Napoleon’s ‘nation of shopkeepers’ the English) proved indomitable and sometimes merciless enemies. A combination of resoluteness, leadership and luck brought victory, features that would recur in the great wars to come.

Leadership and strategic skill, rather than tactical brilliance, characterised Hamilcar in the war. The breakout to the Bagradas river, his turning the tables on Spendius with Naravas’ help, the blockade of the besiegers of Carthage, the entrapment at The Saw, the recovery of initiative after Hannibal’s disaster at Tunes, and the operations with Hanno in Byzacium showed him to be bold, resourceful and untiring in the most difficult situations. For him to take armies of Carthaginian citizens, foreign mercenaries and rebel deserters, never totalling more than 30,000—and for much of the war a great deal less—and fashion them into agile and solidly dependable corps able to face down enemies far more numerous, reveals a high quality of leadership, akin to his son’s charisma with his even more variegated soldiery in the Second Punic War.

Obviously, too, Hamilcar enjoyed good luck and vigorous support from colleagues, notably from Naravas and, in the end, Hanno: plainly Hamilcar was a leader who could attract enthusiastic support from his men and cajole the best from fellow-commanders. Luck was vital to a successful general, as Cicero and Napoleon would stress; Hamilcar’s greatest stroke of luck was Naravas’ defection to him when he faced seeming destruction. In turn he knew how to take both immediate and long-term advantage of it. His campaigning methods are hard to judge, given Polybius’ cursory accounts of most combats. He did rely a great deal on Naravas’ Numidian cavalry (a lesson he passed on to his

Sardinia. Hence R. Laqueur’s theory that the war-narrative was a later addition (*Polybios* (Berlin, 1913) 159–60), viewed with some favour by Loreto (33, cf. 12 n. 32); but this assumes too rigorous a consistency in Polybius’ method. Sardinia as principal (μεγίστην) cause of Second Punic War: 3.10.4. Hamilcar’s supposed intentions: 3.9.7–9.

famous son) and his elephant corps. He could execute surprise moves to take the enemy off-balance, notably in breaking out from Carthage at the start of his command and, later, in pinning the rebels at The Saw. In battle, his tactics were skilful and made the most of enemy mistakes—notably at the Bagradas and then at The Saw—but, so far as we can tell, he practised no spectacular coups like those which marked the victories of his son Hannibal and Scipio the Roman.⁷

Hamilcar was notable for the ruthlessness which he applied to those he viewed as hardened foes. If Hanno also applied it—he had been harsh enough in administering Libya before 241—Polybius does not mention it. Terror measures, well enough known in modern times, were common throughout the ancient world against difficult, even when not disdained, enemies. Nearly two centuries later, Caesar's self-proclaimed slaughter of a million Gauls during the conquest, and mass amputation of several thousand warriors' hands after a last rebellion, were only at the extreme end of a well-recognised scale. The rebels in 240 had not invented torturing and mutilating prisoners. Nor had Hamilcar invented elephant-trampling; he knew recent Hellenistic history. But the Truceless War marked a kind of apogee of extreme and unusual savagery. Later, in Spain, Hamilcar did execute a rebel chief in much the way he executed Spendius and his fellows, but using elephants to kill captives is not again recorded, and attentions like mass amputations are fortunately rare too. It was such extremes, and their implications for organised states, that drew Polybius' attention.⁸

In some ways, the war was an item of leftover business from the First Punic. It arose out of Carthage's financial troubles in that war and the effect of them on both her military forces and her subjects. Carthaginian weakness after the defeat of 241 seemed to offer an opportunity

⁷ On Hannibal's leadership of multicultural troops see Pol. 9.24 and 11.19; Livy 28.12.1–9. Cicero on generals' need for luck (*felicitas*): *De Imperio Gnaei Pompei* 28, 47–8; cf. *Pro Roscio Amerino* 136; E. Wistrand, *Felicitas Imperatoria* (Gothenburg, 1987) 35–43, 88 n. 4. Napoleon reputedly asked 'but is he lucky?' when considering a prospective general: cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (3rd edn.: Oxford, 1979) 359, no. 16; for his maxims on exploiting accident or chance, D.G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (London, 1966, repr. 1993) 146.

⁸ Gauls killed in Caesar's conquest: Pliny, *NH* 7.92 (Caesar claimed 1,192,000 non-Roman dead in his wars); Plutarch, *Caesar* 15, and Appian, *Celtica* 1.6 (1 million Gauls killed, 1 million enslaved); figures perhaps exaggerated (Meier (1995) 330)—but plainly Caesar's own boast. Rebels' hands cut off: Hirtius in Caesar, *Bell. Gall.* 8.44. Atrocities in Boudicca's rebellion in Britain: Tacitus, *Annals* 14.33 (including 'cruces'); Dio 62.7. Polybius on barbarity versus civilisation: Chapter 24.

to compound the loss of Punic Sicily by adding to it the loss of Punic Libya: a prospect which, interestingly though not in fact surprisingly, was less than palatable to both Hiero of Syracuse and the Romans. Had the rebellion succeeded, without leading to internal chaos in Libya, Carthage might have shrunk back into a trading emporium on the edge of Africa, having to do business with—and maybe dependent on—a strong Libyan confederation which, in its turn, would have had to deal successfully or unsuccessfully with the vigorous Numidians to its west.

Much more likely, as suggested earlier, there would have been disruption across Libya. Some Libyan centres, and also Numidian raiders, would have benefited; and so too the Carthaginians. Eventually, especially if help came from their concerned friends abroad, they would surely have reasserted themselves over much or all of Libya. It would have taken time and effort, all the same. The Spanish expedition would have had to be put off, or dropped. Whether Hamilcar still emerged as leader of the republic or this primacy went to Hanno, an eventual second war with the Romans would have taken a very different form, at a much later time—or, conceivably, it might never have come at all. If so, all future history would have been very different.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

POLYBIUS AND OTHER SOURCES

Who recorded the Truceless War before Polybius, the earliest surviving writer?

Born around 200 and drafting his *History* in the 150s and later, Polybius would have had no eyewitnesses to interview; but Greek authors on Carthage's affairs had long been active, some at considerable length. Typical of his treatment of the war, he names no names. There are only three known candidates on the Carthaginian side, and they are not certain to have recorded the events: the Sicilian writer Philinus, who did narrate the First Punic (with, according to Polybius, a distinct pro-Carthaginian bias), and later on Hannibal's friends and historians, Silenus (another Sicilian) and Sosylus of Sparta. Philinus necessarily composed his work after 241, Silenus and Sosylus probably not long after 200. That one or all of them also covered the Truceless War has been suggested, and may be true. All the same, Polybius' generally pro-Carthaginian attitude, and his special interest in Hamilcar, do not prove it. It would be rash to assume that his account took on these features because he followed similar predecessors with carbon-copy-like literalness. Nor is it satisfying to infer that, when he mentions details unflattering to Hamilcar, he is simply copying an anti-Barcid account, making his own an uneasy mixture (or mishmash) of two conflicting Punic historical traditions about the war.

Other possible writers are mere names, like Eumachus of Naples and one Chaereas, who did both treat the Second Punic War, as did, it seems, an equally evanescent Xenophon. The first Roman historians, Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, wrote their works (in Greek) around the same time as Hannibal's friends, and Fabius did mention affairs at Carthage from time to time—he had hard words for later Carthaginian leaders, including Hannibal—but a detailed narrative of the war by him or by Cincius is scarcely likely. One or both of them, though, may have been responsible for the distorted claims over the Italian traders' episode which surface in Appian and Zonaras. These claims, as suggested earlier, were an effort at justifying the rape of Sardinia. Polybius clearly ignored them.

Obviously we cannot rule out the strong possibility that, in reality, he drew on other, quite unknown histories or memoirs of the Truceless War. They would be in Greek, since nothing suggests he could read Punic, but many Carthaginians spoke and wrote Greek; nor were Silenus and Sosylus the only educated Greeks to seek their fortunes at Carthage. For that matter, at least one narrative drawing on evidence from participants or eyewitnesses in the rebel camp should not be ruled out either.¹

Lost sources behind surviving sources are always an important issue. All writers had points of view and sometimes had strong feelings about people and events. Of course this holds for Polybius himself, as well as other surviving sources; but in the effort to uncover whose accounts lie behind the ones we have, it is rather often assumed that the surviving ones—Polybius' included—copy out their predecessors with minimal changes of wording or opinion.

Efforts to identify his source or sources, by noting how he handles different episodes and depicts different characters, are notably subjective. An example is the report of the veterans being angry with Hamilcar (1.68.12)—on one interpretation, taken from an anti-Barcid source, for it is assumed that no pro-Barcid writer would record the unflattering fact. The further (unprovable) assumption has to be that a pro-Barcid writer was automatically dishonest on all such matters.

In a more complicated case, Polybius, picturing the Carthaginians (71.6) as being in despair over lacking all military resources against the rebellion, is supposedly reproducing a false claim by a pro-Barcid source; because he soon reveals Hanno at the head of troops, artillery and even elephants (73.1–2), supposedly taking this from a different source. The presumed pro-Barcid source—in this theory—wished to cover up how strong Carthage actually remained even after the peace with Rome, and how Hamilcar was already planning a revenge-war. On this view, Polybius has carelessly copied two conflicting accounts, one more truthful than the other. It would follow, if this theory were correct, that the pro-Barcid author therefore said very little about Hanno's operations, or nothing at all. The first military episode in any detail

¹ Fabius: cf. Chapter 4 n. 2. Cincius, praetor in 208, later as a prisoner of Hannibal's conversed with the general and, later still, wrote a complete history of Rome: cf. *KIP* 1.1190 (H.G. Gundel). On the Barcid and the Second Punic War historians: Lazenby (1978) 258–64; Hoyos (2003) 212–22. Traders episode: Chapter 11 with n. 2. For the suggestion that even an ex-rebel memoir might be available, cf. Chapter 5 at n. 1.

in this author would have been Hamilcar's breakout from Carthage. If so, the inferiority of this version of events must have been patent to any writer who had others at hand, and we would have to wonder why Polybius bothered with it at all.

As shown earlier, the likely explanation for Polybius' seeming self-contradictions (at 71.6 and 73.1–2) is literary. He writes up the initial despair of the Carthaginians for dramatic impact. That done, he gets on with the facts.²

It is obvious enough that he views Hamilcar with favour and Hanno as an unsatisfactory (though not quite worthless) second-rater. Equally he personally has nothing but contempt for the rebel leaders and, by extension, their men. Yet his narrative abounds in details which paint a much more nuanced picture than one dutifully based on, and shifting between, sources monochromatically pro-Barcid and anti-Hanno in one case, and vice versa in the other. The Carthaginians' oppression of their Libyan subjects is unsparingly revealed; so too their attempts to get out of paying their veterans all that was owed, and then their folly in letting the aggrieved men reassemble into a single armed force. Hamilcar's maladroitness in getting himself entrapped by Spendius, Autaritus and Naravas is reported without extenuation. A pro-Barcid inventor could have claimed incompetence by some of his lieutenants, treachery by locals, or both.

Again, Polybius does not hide, though he does not stress either, how all of Hamilcar's savagery towards captured rebels and his sweeps through Libya still failed to prevent Spendius and his colleagues breaking out into the countryside anew, after abandoning the siege of Carthage; and how for a time they thus retrieved the strategic initiative, and even won some of the off-and-on clashes against his forces. Hamilcar's double-dealing with the rebel leaders at The Saw is unmistakeable, even though Polybius sees no need to underline it by personal comment. Even Hanno is eventually, if succinctly, given a modicum of credit: he signals his willingness to let bygones be bygones with Hamilcar, and it is their sterling collaboration that brings victory at last—not only over the rebels in the field but over Hippacra and Utica afterwards.

² Loreto, 81, 83 (anti-Barcid source at Pol. 1.68.12); 128–9 (a 'filobarcide' source at 71.6 and a non-Barcid one at 73.1–2); cf. n. 3 below. Loreto holds to the view that the Carthaginians were planning a new Roman war from the time the old one ended (82–84, 128–9, 201–3), a quite unconvincing thesis (cf. Hoyos (1999), section on 'Origins').

It is not satisfying and, worse, is not successful to explain this variety and nuance as due to the historian supposedly shifting, time after time and sometimes between one paragraph and the next, from carefully copying one source to carefully copying another—now to get a version that matched his own prejudices, now to fill in an episode with details available in one source but not another, sometimes for colour and atmosphere. No doubt the available accounts of the war each had its own point of view, though even so not all are likely to have been so wedded to bias as to depict everything in simple white or black—pro- or anti-Hamilcar, pro- or anti-Hanno, pro-Carthage and anti-Libyan. Yet it is strictly implausible to suppose that extant writers, Polybius included, could not analyse a phenomenon, or express an opinion, or embellish an item—or even choose a particular word—unless they copied it more or less verbatim from one or other of their predecessors: not one of whom, on the same theory, was so regimented.³

Polybius' narrative, in sum, looks like nothing so much as his own distinctive work, whatever his range of sources. With all its limitations, and even with his precise sources unidentifiable, his account is coherent, vivid and instructive, both about a major episode in ancient history and about his methods of reportage and analysis.

What then of later and lesser sources? Diodorus, the Sicilian historian of Caesar's era, narrated the war too, though nearly all of his account is lost. Since the extracts that do survive from the relevant Book 25 covered Roman and Carthaginian events from 241 to 221, his account of the Truceless War was plainly shorter than Polybius'. His few and brief excerpts (25.1–7) actually echo Polybius almost uncannily, inviting the obvious deduction that he drew directly on the *Histories*. But strong efforts have been made to show that his version, instead, draws (directly or via an intermediary) on one of the early authors whom Polybius also used, and that this not only explains the echoes but reveals something of the earlier historiography of the war.

Such reasonings rest partly on the use of single words or particular phrases, partly on the supposedly differing slants that Polybius and Diodorus give to some shared item. Diodorus, for example, explains the war as due to the Carthaginians 'wronging' and 'cheating' their

³ Polybius' (and Diodorus') ultimate source pro-Barcid and anti-Hanno: Walbank, *Comm.* 1.131, 139–40, 143; La Bua (1966) 233–52, esp. 247–52; Seibert, *FzH* 95 and n. 52; Loreto, 19–20, 29–32, 128–9, 205–6, 208 n. 37; Gómez (1996) 196–8 ('posible'), 215 (treating it as a fact).

mercenaries (25.2). Supposedly, this contradicts Polybius who—in this theory, anyway—simply blamed the mercenaries’ barbarism and irrationality; and thus Diodorus is seen as relaying a different source. The inference is not at all persuasive. After all, Polybius’ own account tells how the Carthaginian authorities hoped to beat the men’s claims down, and how Hanno prevaricatingly and provocatively pursued this aim at Sicca (1.66.5, 67.1); this could concisely be called cheating or wronging, even by an honest Carthaginian. True, Polybius does report the veterans inflating their claims unscrupulously (66.11, 68.6–9)—but so does Diodorus in another excerpt (25.6), and fresh arguments then become necessary to get around that. The use of different terminology in the earlier passage need just be Diodorus’ choice, using an appropriate verb to summarise what he found in Polybius. And with his text a mere grouping of excerpts, we also cannot prove that he ignored or denied Polybius’ graphic account of how Mathos, Spendius and their cohorts disrupted Gisco’s almost-successful settlement and sparked the mutiny.⁴

As another example of putting over-heavy weight on individual language items, there is Polybius’ later report how the rebels ‘decreed’ (*edogmatopoesan*: 81.4) that future Carthaginian prisoners would be tortured to death and other captives mutilated. Diodorus writes that they ‘enacted’ this (*enomothetsan*: 25.3.1), supposed proof of separate sources again. Or, for still another word-contrast pressed to extremes, while Polybius calls the rebels *esebekotes*, ‘impious culprits’, after Gisco’s slaughter (81.2), Diodorus calls them simply *apostantes*, ‘rebels’ (25.3.1)—a rather tame term which allegedly reveals much: nothing less than an objective source for Diodorus contrasting with the biased fount drawn on by Polybius. In reality, these verbal contrasts need have no special force, and certainly prove nothing about sources. *Apostantes* may even be due to the Byzantine excerptor, reckoning that to open a disconnected new paragraph with a bald reference to ‘impious culprits’ would puzzle

⁴ Loreto, 16–21 opts for Diodorus using ‘una fonte precedente a Polibio e da questi impiegata’ (21), ‘alternativamente Sosilo o Sileno’ (17)—but later he also posits a pro-Hanno, anti-Barcid pamphlet for at least some items (31–2; not Philinus, 29–30). Then to cope with Diod. 25.6 criticising the mercenaries, he postulates that the Hoeschel set of excerpts (to which this one belongs) is less faithful to Diodorus’ original text than the Constantine-excerpts (which, of course, include 25.2). But see Chapter 6 n. 2. Gómez (previous n.) not only posits a pro-Barcid source but, most implausibly, supposes (197–200) that it was not much lengthier than Polybius’ account, which allows him to judge the latter an almost verbatim reproduction.

readers. It is worth noticing too that, just a few lines later, Diodorus writes of ‘the above-mentioned impiety (*asebeia*) and savagery (*omotes*)’ as justifying Hamilcar’s own harshness. By the same theoretical rigidity, this ought to mean he is switching sources in mid-paragraph—indeed, must now be switching to Polybius who, lower down in his own passage (81.7), writes that ‘nothing more impious (*asebesteron*) or savage (*omoteron*)’ than such degraded behaviour can exist in humans. In reality, on all sensible criteria, Diodorus’ source for the war is Polybius.⁵

Occasional efforts to identify which earlier writers served Nepos’, Appian’s and Zonaras’ minuscule résumés are just as dubious. In one hypothesis, Nepos found no earlier Roman historian who had handled the war, and therefore he looked up Silenus and Sosylus, which supposedly gives his items a reflected glow of reliability (even though, in other contexts, the same writers may be viewed askance as pro-Barcid). But Nepos’ account could just as well be a clumsy résumé—perhaps from memory—of Polybius’.

Appian’s very brief references to the war do show that he consulted an account quite different from Polybius’ or Diodorus’, and they suggest that it was Roman, but not that it was lengthy. Most notably, he gives the propaganda version of the traders affair which the Romans presented in 237 (*Iberica* 4.15, *Libyca* 5.21–2). His fuzzy idea that the mercenaries were simply Gauls (*Sicelica* 2.7, *Iber.* 4.15, *Lib.* 5.18) hardly draws on a detailed account of North African events, either. The concessions he reports, by the Romans to the Carthaginians, are a mixture of the credible (for instance, allowing Italian merchants to trade with Carthage, and allowing the republic to recruit Italians as mercenaries) and the dubious (a supposed, but fruitless, Roman peace-broking embassy; for all these items see *Sic.* 2.10–11, *Lib.* 5.19). This strongly suggests that Appian’s strictly limited interest in the Truceless War caused him to consult only a cursory, even passing description of it

⁵ ‘Decreed’ vs ‘enacted’ (πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν ἐδογματοποίησαν versus εἰς δὲ τὸ λοιπὸν ἐνομοθέτησαν): this for Loreto, 104 n. 91, is a ‘divergenza che conferma la non derivazione del secondo dal primo’. For another supposed example: Chapter 19 n. 3. ‘Impious culprits’ vs ‘rebels’ (Pol. ἡσεβηκότας vs Diod. ἀποστάντας) prompts La Bua (1966) 237–8 to divine in Diodorus’ source ‘un atteggiamento più imparziale e meno filopunico’ than in Polybius; he also thinks (241, cf. 235) that Diodorus drew on this early source via a later, unidentifiable writer (for his full treatment see La Bua, 233–52). Such multiplyingly intricate argumentation is common in advanced *Quellenkritik*; like the astronomer Ptolemy’s epicycles within cycles to explain planetary orbits, it often does not persuade. On debilitating weaknesses of such *Quellenkritik* cf. Hoyos (1999), under ‘Sources’.

in a Rome-focussed source—one hardly identifiable. Even then, given his egregious treatment of the third-century Punic Wars overall, some gratuitous Appianic guesses or even inventions in these passages cannot be ruled out either.⁶

John Zonaras, the twelfth-century Byzantine scholar who for this period epitomised Cassius Dio's Roman history, is as skimpy as Appian. Zonaras mentions some similar items: for instance the Romans' concessions, a claim that the Carthaginians' own slaves joined the rebellion, and the traders affair, but differences in some details—not just compared with Appian but with other sources as well—hardly mean we must reckon in yet another early source. Rather, they point to different choices or emphases by our authors (and sometimes by their abbreviators too, in Dio's case as in Diodorus).⁷

Once it is allowed that few ancient writers simply copied their material more or less verbatim from earlier accounts, searching for a particular original source behind any statement becomes muddled, subjective, and often unprofitable. It was perfectly practicable, and probably was normal, for an author to consult two or more earlier accounts before—and while—structuring his own. As one well-known example, Livy's narrative of the first three years of the Second Punic War (in his Books 21–23) makes close and extensive use of Polybius' (in his Book 3), but interwoven with plentiful information from other sources, including Fabius and Cincius. Blanket assumptions about the quality of his non-Polybian authorities (especially Roman annalistic writers of the

⁶ Nepos using Silenus and Sosylus: Loreto, 28–9, 83 n. 230, 119 (hence, he holds, a 'sperimentata bontà euristica del materiale'; for an application of this doctrine see Chapter 18 n. 23). Appian: cf. Chapter 11 n. 5. Loreto (22–7) has Appian consult both a Roman source and a pro-Carthaginian one, as the latter supposedly gave items about the rebellion (*Lib.* 5.18) which Loreto thinks a Roman author would not be interested in—and the fact that Appian terms the Libyans both 'subjects' of Carthage (ὑπήκοοι: *Lib.* 5.18, *Sic.* 2.8) and 'allies' (σύμμαχοι: *Iber.* 4.15) 'obbliga a pensare a due fonti diverse' (26). Yet Appian's silence on the grievances behind the war Loreto sees as his own conscious decision (*ibid.*): logically this means that Appian—recalling many another ancient writer enmeshed in the toils of strict *Quellenkritik*—is both a slavish transmitter of earlier sources and an independent-minded adapter of the same sources. On Appian as a source for the first two Punic Wars and the Barcids: de Sanctis, 3.1.234, 32.365–6; C.G. Lendl, 'Appians "Annibaike"', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 34.1 (Berlin-New York, 1993) 428–62; Hoyos (2003) 218–20.

⁷ Zon. 8.17.9 (concessions), 18.9 (traders). Appian and Zonaras on rebelling slaves: Chapter 8 n. 11.

second and first centuries B.C.) are commonly made, and are usually disparaging—sometimes to the detriment of historical analysis.⁸

Even when an original source can be identified securely, there is still the question of how accurate it was. Where originals do not survive but were utilised by sources that do, issues about accuracy obviously cannot be solved simply ascribing a particular item (in Polybius, say) to one or other earlier source (say, Silenus). A quite separate task remains: to test the reported item—whatever its known or presumed ultimate source—against other available evidence, and on criteria of probability and coherence versus improbability and self-contradiction. After all, this has to be done with original sources that do survive, like Caesar's *Commentaries* or Augustus' *Res Gestae*—not to mention Polybius' account of Greece in his own day. Where originals have not survived, it may reasonably be argued that identifying a possible original very often comes second to applying these criteria.

As was stressed at the outset of this work, studying Polybius' account of the Truceless War throws light on his methods and preoccupations. The format is neither a bald narrative—something not to be looked for in his work—nor evenly proportioned. Because his aim is to make history practically, or 'pragmatically', useful to readers, he gives a good deal of space to moralising or analytical comment, as shown earlier: on the significance of the war (1.65.3–8), the Carthaginians' perplexities and Libyans' grievances (71–72), the diseased natures of the rebels (81.5–11) and Hiero of Syracuse's realistic geopolitical attitudes (83.2–4).

As for the events, particular episodes earn detailed treatment for military, psychological, moralistic or dramatic reasons—notably the negotiations at Tunes and their breakdown (68.1–70.7), Hamilcar's breakout from Carthage and victory at the Bagradas (75.7–76.10), Naravas' defection (78.1–9), the massacres of Gisco and others (79.8–80.13), and the drama at The Saw (84.9–85.7). But, vivid as these detailed

⁸ On Livy's use of his sources see T.J. Luce, *Livy: the Composition of his History* (Princeton, 1977) 139–229, especially 188–229. On his Books 21–23: de Sanctis, 3.2.168–86, 342–7. Hoyos (2006) studies in detail his use of Polybius and others for Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. On the worth of his sources for the early Second Punic War in Spain, including the (usually despised) Roman annalists: D. Hoyos, 'Generals and annalists: geographic and chronological obscurities in the Scipios' campaigns in Spain, 218–211 B.C.', *Klio* 83 (2001) 68–92.

passages are, they contrast with the much thinner treatment of several other important stages and aspects of the war.⁹

Strangely for a war-narrative, practical military details are sparingly given. While Hanno's clashes outside Utica, and Hamilcar's breakout and battle at the Bagradas, are reported at some length (74.2–12, 75.4–76.10), Hamilcar's and Naravas' battle-tactics against Spendius and Autaritus, in the second major battle, are not. Again, Hamilcar had followed up his Bagradas victory by storming or winning over towns in Libya (76.10), but there is not one geographical indicator to guide us. Later still, Polybius leaves it to his readers to infer that Hamilcar continued these activities, with Naravas' help, after defeating Spendius and Autaritus; the historian—only afterwards—supplies mere hints of this (81.1, 82.1–2). Further on again, he shows Hamilcar and Naravas still thus engaged, along with the new general Hannibal (82.13), and again only in generalised terms. No more specific is his account of the second inland expedition, until the rebels found themselves trapped at The Saw (84.2–7): we are told that battles and panics took place, but not where or how many. Then, of course, the locale of The Saw itself is unknown, and therefore how Hamilcar achieved his feat there. In the final campaign, we have no details about his and Hanno's fruitful cooperation, just that it happened. Leptis is the one place named. Thus it is impossible to judge Hamilcar in any depth as a general in the war.

Polybius is cursory on many other points. Hanno supposedly threw away four other opportunities for early victories against the rebels, near the unknown Gorza, with no particulars (74.13–14). The historian records how the Libyans, men and women together, joined enthusiastically in the revolt, pouring in volunteers and money (70.9, 72.4–5), but leaves readers in the dark about which communities took a notable part, what the funds amounted to, how—and how often—they were raised and transmitted to Tunes, whether the oaths sworn at the Libyan towns (72.5) included military commitments or indeed political ones, or who any of the Libyans' own leaders were apart from Mathos and—perhaps—Zarzas. As for details of how the Libyans, Utica, and

⁹ Other notable topics which Polybius handles in detail are Hanno's opening operations outside Utica (74.1–12) and the Romans' attitudes to Carthage during the war (83.5–11).

Hippacra were treated after the war, these are completely (and predictably) passed over.

His entire narrative mentions only ten places in Punic Africa relevant to events: Carthage, Tunes, Utica and Hippacra often, the river Bagradas and Sicca twice, and four others—Gorza, Emporia, The Saw and Leptis—each in only a single episode. In similar vein, the individuals who earn mention by name are few: on the Carthaginian side Gisco, Hanno, Hamilcar and his colleague Hannibal, Bostar in Sardinia, and Naravas; among the rebels Mathos, Spendius, Autaritus and—once only—Zarzas. Hannibal, Bostar and Zarzas apart, all the others are treated in strongly moralising and psychological contexts: Gisco, Hamilcar and Naravas sympathetically, the rest with varying levels of criticism. Hamilcar plays the chief rôle; but his rise to supremacy in Carthage's affairs, thanks to the war, is simply taken for granted. In further sharp contrast to the narratives of the First Punic War and wars later in the *Histories*, chronology is almost totally absent. Not even the advance from one year to the next is stated. That the war followed the peace with Rome and lasted three years and four months are the only chronological details.¹⁰

The historian's interests are not primarily in military, topographical, economic, propagandist or even political issues, although international relations between Carthage, Syracuse and Rome are a limited exception. It looks too as though, the further he moved into his narrative and into the topics that most stimulated him, he lost interest in the minutiae of the fighting and even in larger aspects of the war (organisation and finance, for instance) which he presumably felt threw no light on those topics. It is quite unlikely that his source or sources did the same: for they were not engaged, as he was, in writing a history of the whole Mediterranean world from 219 on, in which events from 264 to 220 formed simply a prologue.

Polybius' prime interests by far are the 'pragmatic'—but in fact generalised, and only theoretically discussed—topics of mercenaries' untrustworthiness, the barbarism always lying ready to pounce at the gate of unwary civilised states, and how states need to exert themselves to the uttermost to combat it. In turn, these concerns affect the structure

¹⁰ Bagradas mentioned, 1.75.6, 86.9; Sicca, 66.6, 67.1; Gorza, 74.13; Emporia, 82.6; The Saw, 85.7; Leptis, 87.7. Hecatompylus, i.e. Theveste, is mentioned (73.1) in connexion with Hanno's earlier campaigns in Libya.

of his narrative as well as its emphases. Operations and actions which (in his view) illuminate the topics are treated at some length—including Hanno's opening campaign, since it exemplifies how *not* to deal initially with a crisis. At the same time he is not very informative, in practical terms, on how to solve such crises successfully. As noted above, the methods he implies—he does not prescribe them explicitly—were obvious, but would often be hard for Greek employers to practise: like paying mercenaries regularly and fairly, and dispersing them strategically when they had grievances. Implicitly necessary, too (Polybius does not state these points explicitly either), were favourable contingencies impossible to ensure: generous neighbours, for instance, and an able general like Hamilcar should things go wrong.¹¹

As a Greek and a rationalist, he is anxious to stress the moral and practical superiority of civilisation over barbarism: thus how 'blended and barbarous characters differ from those reared in proper education, laws and civilised principles.' This is broad, theoretical and again one-sided generalising. After all, the Libyan veterans in the army of Sicily had come from settled, often Punicised communities, and some may have had Carthaginian forebears, if Aristotle is right about Carthaginians going out from time to time as colonists. Likewise the Libyan volunteers who joined the rebel armies. Libyans may have counted as 'barbarians' in Greek eyes, but that is not Polybius' criterion; for in those terms the 'educated and civilised' Carthaginians were barbarians too. The rebel mercenaries, in their turn, included Campanians and the men Polybius calls *Mixellenes*, probably south Italians and Sicilians as shown earlier: people not ordinarily judged barbarians by Greeks. And the rebellion had finally spread, with treachery and vicious massacres, even to Carthage's own sister-cities Utica and Hippacra. On

¹¹ Loreto sees Polybius offering an analysis 'in funzione di un destinatario ideale che dalla sua lezione poteva cioè trarre concretamente partito' (8); for Polybius 'il mercenario appare come un tipo antropologico' (9) and he offers 'una propria patologia' of mercenary mutiny (10), serving a function not solely 'storicografico-ricostruttiva' but also 'sociologico-didascalica' (11). Loreto is less clear on whether Polybius' 'pathology' is accurate, and what his remedies are (or should be). Nor is it plausible that Polybius aims to counsel Hellenistic powers against 'l'adozione od il mantenimento di sistemi militari a base mercenaria' and in favour 'dell'adozione di sistemi nazionali' like Rome's (11–12). Polybius makes no such claim, and over the next fourteen books he shows how successfully the Barcids used mercenary forces on a far larger scale than the army of Sicily's. Pelegrín Campo (2000) 68–9, 72–4, criticises Loreto's 'patologia' for not recognising that Polybius distinguishes between Greek mercenaries and barbarian ones, with only the latter qualifying as brutish and uncivilised.

the Punic side—the side of education and civilisation, according to the historian—there were also mercenaries and even ex-rebels. The revolt of Libya, in turn, had been provoked by the civilised Carthaginians' vicious treatment of their subjects down to 241, as he emphasises elsewhere.

Plainly, what the historian is looking at is not the rebels' ethnic or even geographical origins, but their conduct: the savagery towards moderates in their own ranks and towards Gisco and his companions, their killing or mutilation of prisoners, the cannibalism at The Saw, the massacres at Utica and Hippacra. Polybius' disgust stems from the frequency of these atrocities, especially those by the mercenaries—a perennial anxiety in themselves, as already noted—and, probably too, because some were inflicted on captives of high rank, like Gisco, his entourage and Hamilcar's colleague Hannibal. His extended metaphor of the rebels' natures as cancerous, ever-worsening growths matches this. Yet he also records how atrocities were not performed by them alone. Hamilcar responded to Gisco's murder with elephant-tramplings, which were not a common practice, and the crosses at Tunes; while the last act of all was Mathos' own death by torment in the educated and civilised city of his conquerors. The reality of the Truceless War was cruelty by both sides, and the jettisoning by both of even rudimentary morality in conflict. An outsider might well judge both sides equally blameworthy. But for Polybius, a Greek statesman himself and writing for statesmen and others, such an admission was impossible. Perhaps even to perceive it was impossible.¹²

¹² On Polybius' diagnostics of barbarism vs civilisation (1.65.7, 81.5–11), cf. Chapter 16 and n. 5. Carthaginian oppression of Libya: Chapter 3.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE WAR

ALL DATES ARE APPROXIMATE

Summer 241 BC	Army of Sicily transferred to Carthage Negotiations over arrears and demobilisation
August 241	Army sent to Sicca
Aug.–Sept. 241	Fruitless negotiations with Hanno at Sicca
Oct. 241	Army returns to Carthage Negotiations at Tunes with Gisco
Nov. 241	Mutiny at Tunes; Gisco and companions seized
Late 241–Early 240	Spread of revolt to Libya Military preparations at Carthage
Jan.–Feb. 240	Hanno advances to Utica, commences operations
Spring 240	Punic fleet opens patrols around coasts
Spring–Early Summer 240	Hamilcar appointed general, prepares fresh army Many foreign traders under arrest
Summer 240	Traders dispute with R settled Battle of Bagradas Hamilcar's first inland campaign Rebels pursue Hamilcar Sardinia mercenaries mutiny Punic expedition to Sardinia miscarries
Sept.–Nov. 240	Hamilcar entrapped by rebels Hamilcar's victory with Naravas' aid
Late 240–Early 239	Hamilcar's clemency operations in Libya
Spring 239	Gisco and companions murdered at rebel camp outside Hippacra (?) Utica appeals to Rome for help, but is refused
Summer 239	Hamilcar's no-quarter policy in Libya He calls Hanno to join him Bitter dispute between the generals Hanno removed from command Emporia convoy to Carthage founders Defection of Utica and Hippacra to rebels

Aug.–Sept. 239	Siege of Carthage begun Hamilcar, Hannibal and Naravas harass rebel communications with interior
Autumn–Winter 239/238	Rebels in severe straits outside Carthage
March 238	Rebels lift siege of Carthage, retire to Tunes Spendius and Autaritus march inland against Hamilcar
Mar.–June <i>or</i> July 238	Second campaign in Libya
July–Aug. 238	The Saw
Aug.–Sept. 238	Hamilcar & Hannibal sweep through Libya to the coast
Oct. 238	Mathos blockaded at Tunes Hannibal defeated outside Tunes Hamilcar regroups, reconciliation with Hanno Mathos abandons Tunes for Byzacium
Late 238	Sardinians expel mutineers
Dec. 238	Final battle with rebels near Leptis Minor
Jan.–Feb. 237	Hamilcar & Hanno receive submission of Libya Preparations to retake Sardinia and for expedition to Spain
Mar. 237	Utica & Hippacra besieged, soon yield End of war
Mar.–Apr. 237	Sardinia crisis with Rome
April 237	Hamilcar's expedition leaves for Spain

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I. ABBREVIATIONS

(full bibliographic details in Part III)

- CAH² *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn.
DCPP *Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique* [see Baurain et al.]
Kl P *Kleine Pauly*
LDC Picard, *Life and Death of Carthage*
LSJ Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek Lexicon*
SA Kromayer & Veith, *Schlachten-Atlas* (1922–1929)

II. SOURCES

- Aen. Tact., *Poliorc.*: Aeneas Tacticus, *Poliorcetica*
App. *Iber., Lib., Sic.*: Appian, *Iberica, Libyca, Sicelica*
Aristotle, *Pol.* (*Politics*)
Pseudo-Aristotle, *Econ.* (*Economica*)
Curtius Rufus, *Historia Alexandri*
Diod.: Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*
Dio [see also Zon.]: Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*
Eutrop.: Eutropius, *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita*
Itin. Ant.: *Itinerarium Antonini*
Justin: *Pompei Trogi Historiarum Philippicarum Epitome*
Nepos, *Hamil.*: *Vita Hamilcaris*
OCD³: *Oxford Classical Dictionary*
OGIS: *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, ed. W. Dittenberger (Leipzig, 1903–5)
Oros.: Orosius, *Historia adversus Paganos*
P. Hibeh: *Hibeh Papyri* (London, 1906)
Pliny, *NH* (*Naturalis Historia*)
Plut.: Plutarch, *Vitae*
Pol.: Polybius, *Historiae*
Polyaen.: Polyaenus, *Strategemata*
Pompeius Trogus: see Justin
Ptol., *Geog.*: Ptolemy, *Geographia*
Silius, *Punica*
Stephen of Byzantium, *Ethnica*
Strabo, *Geography*
Val. Max.: Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX*
Zon.: Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*

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[abbreviations used in the Notes are shown in square brackets]

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Very frequently mentioned names (e.g. Carthage, Hippacra, Tunes, Utica, Hamilcar, Hanno the Great, Mathos, Polybius) are not indexed. HB = Hamilcar Barca

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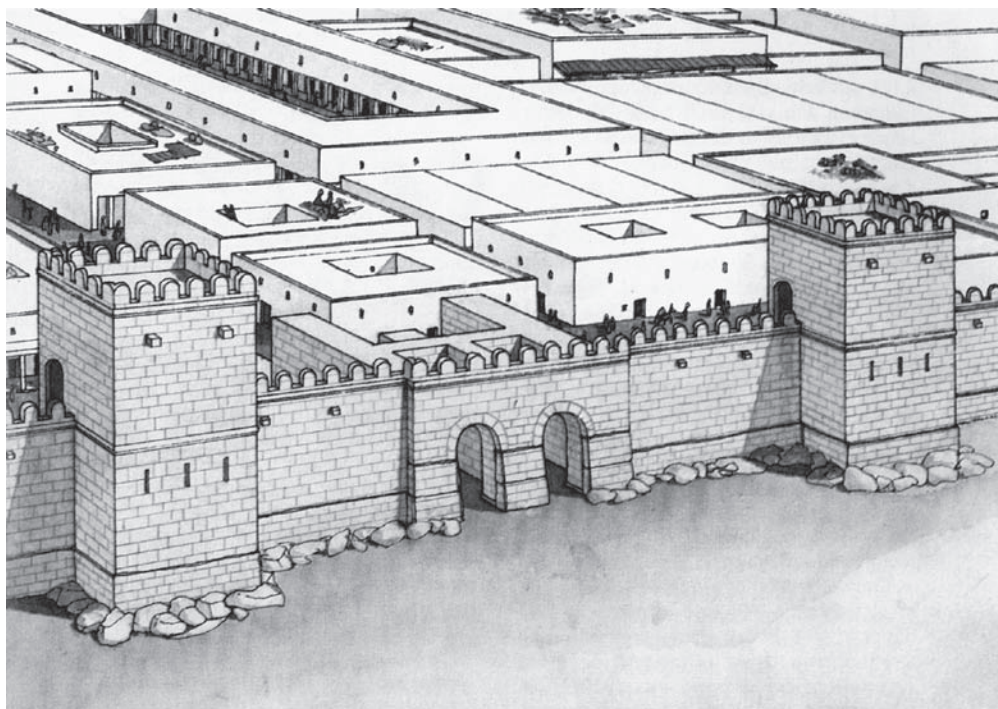
1 Portrait of Hamilcar(?). Supposed bust of Hamilcar (in Rome), though probably not a genuine portrait.



2 Soldier's mailcoat. Reconstructed from remnants found in Lake Trasimene, possibly or probably dating to Third Century bc (details obscure), it suggests one type of armour used by professional troops of the time. Reproduced from *The Armour of Imperial Rome* by H. Russell Robinson (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1975. [The publisher has ceased to exist and all efforts at tracing the original copyright holder have been without success.]



3 Elephant with war-castle (and baby). Etruscan painted dish *ca.* 250 bc, in the Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome. Reproduced from S. Peters (ed.), *Hannibal ad Portas*, with kind permission of Theiss Verlag, Stuttgart, and the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Rome.



4 Sea-wall of Carthage (artist's reconstruction), illustrating the city's fortifications. Reproduced from M.-H. Fantar, *Carthage: la Cité punique* (Paris and Tunis, 1995), by kind permission of CNRS Éditions, Paris.



5 Carthaginian military officer of Second(?) Century BC. Headless terracotta statue, found in a temple near the Gare de Salammbô at Carthage. Reproduced from M.-H. Fantar, *Carthage: la Cité punique*, by kind permission of CNRS Éditions, Paris.



6 Polybius. Plaster cast of a relief portrait set up at Cleitor in Arcadia by a descendant in the Third Century AD; the original remains in Greece, reportedly in a deteriorating state. Polybius is dressed as a soldier, with lance and sword, and with a shield and helmet on the ground behind him. The cast is held by the Archäologisches Institut, Universität Freiburg-im-Bremen, and reproduced with its kind permission.



7.1 obv.



7.1 rev.



7.2 obv.



7.2 rev.



7.3 obv.



7.3 rev.



7.4 obv.



7.4 rev.



7.5 obv.



7.5 rev.



7.6 obv.



7.6 rev.

7 Carthaginian and Libyan rebel coins, from the collection of Dr Stephen Mulligan (Sydney, Australia)

7.1 Electrum stater, Carthage, *ca.* 300 BC. *Obverse:* head of Tanit to left, crowned with wreath of corn, wearing earring with pendant and necklace. *Reverse:* free horse standing to right. When the Carthaginians sent the mercenaries to Sicca, they were each given a gold stater to cover their immediate expenses.

7.2 Billon shekel of the Libyan rebels. *Obverse:* head of Herakles to left wearing lion skin. *Reverse:* lion walking right; Punic M (*mem*) above; ΑΙΒΥΩΝ below exergue line.

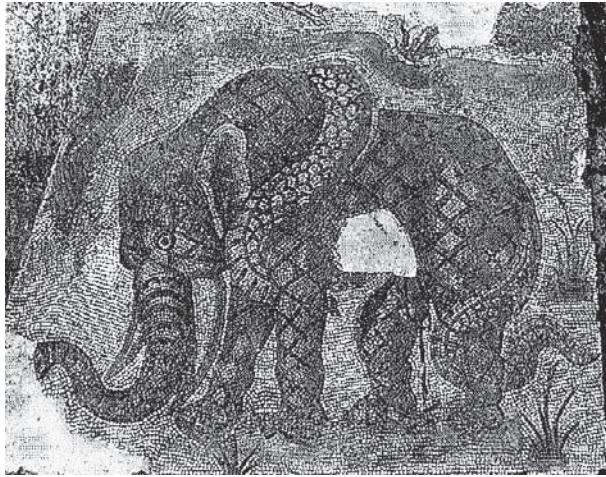
7.3 Rebel billon didrachm or shekel, coarsely overstruck on a Carthaginian original. *Obverse:* head of Herakles to left wearing lion skin. *Reverse:* ΑΙΒΥΩΝ, lion prowling to right (originally a Carthaginian horse); Punic M above.

7.4 Billon double shekel. *Obverse:* head of Zeus to left, ΑΙΒΥΩΝ on left, Punic M on right. *Reverse:* bull butting to right; Punic M above.

7.5 Libyan rebel billon didrachm or shekel. *Obverse:* head of Tanit to left, wreathed with corn, wearing necklace and triple pendant earring. *Reverse:* horse standing to right, Punic letter M beneath, with three pellets of triangular arrangement between horse's hind legs.

7.6 Carthaginian electrum stater, *ca.* 300 BC. *Obverse:* head of Tanit to left, crowned with wreath of corn, wearing earring with pendant and necklace. *Reverse:* free horse standing to right.

Photographs provided by courtesy of Bob Simpson, Colin Pitchfork, and Jim Noble (all of Noble Numismatics Ltd. of Sydney).



8 Elephant attacked by python. Part of a Roman mosaic of a hunt scene found at Dermesch close to Carthage: now in the Musée de Carthage. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institut National du Patrimoine de la République Tunisienne.